His Decease at Jerusalem

BY

ABRAHAM KUYPER, D. D.

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Meditations
on the
Passion and Death of our Lord

BY

ABRAHAM KUYPER, D.D., LL.D.
Former Prime Minister
of the Netherlands

Translated from the Dutch
by
JOHN HENDRIK DE VRIES, D.D.

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FOREWORD

ESTRANGEMENT from the Passion of our Lord spiritually impoverishes more and more the Church of Christ. A mist gathers around the cross, that enswathes and darkens it. True, it is not pulled down; somber as it is, with its striking anguish, it is still left to stand, where it stood; but something is put before it. Something which, I well know, is transparent; something, which, while softening the naked lines of the cross, still leaves them visible. The anguish of the Lama Sabachthani with its woeful apperception may still affect the heart slightly, but the grief of the Man of Sorrows may no more enthrall us.

One sees it before one's eyes in Roman Catholic as well as in Protestant lands. The transparent swathing of the Cross of Golgotha is the artistic work of the spirit of the times, whose influence even the best do not escape, and is therefore common to all parts of the ecclesiastical world. Yonder the Mater dolorosa gave place to the "Queen of heaven", among us it was made plain to the listening multitude, first: that the resurrection surpassed the significance of the Cross; then: that in importance the Person of Christ exceeded His Cross; and again: that the after-effect of His historical influence, or even the mystic remembrance of Him Who went from us, must crowd out the tragic of Golgotha.

The apostolic determination "not to know anything, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2), came in conflict with the ash-colored aesthetic sense of our passing age.

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As Easter approaches, Passion sermons are still preached, but the suffering of the Mediator between God and man no more fills and moves as aforetime the soul of the congregation.*

All as result of this: that to become holy in one's own estimate, rather than to obtain "peace through the blood of the Cross", became the ambition of the devout mind. What justification is before God and through God, is still learned in general by rote, but only by a few is it learned with the heart.

And though we do not under-value here the good right of reaction against a sentimentality which in a sickly way has made game of the "blood" of Golgotha, more than in a sacred way has enthused over it, yet it cannot be denied, that this change in the Christian perception has broken the accord of apostolic witness, and that to become spiritually strong again, with sanctified sentiment the Church of Christ must get back again to the Cross.

With sentiment.

It should not be barren, mechanical and incoherent exhibitions of loosely-tacked-together passion-scenes. What Paul wrote to the Galatians (3:1, Dutch version) must continue to be rule: "before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been vividly portrayed, as being crucified among you."

Sentiment, we do not shrink from borrowing this word from our younger men of letters, for in their warm protest against the frozen classicism of the older schools they are right.

Lack of sentiment has gradually killed our Lenten preaching. The adorable passion-drama was artistically cut apart into a series of passion-texts. The succession in order of time was irreproachable. At one time it was Peter who was made the chief

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* In the Netherlands the weeks preceding Easter are called: "The Passion Weeks."—Translator.

personage with his denial, at another time Judas with his betrayal, again it was Pilate with his juridic hesitation, and in turn Barabbas and Herod, Annas and the slandering priests, while the Man of sorrows moved among them only indirectly. It was no longer one Divine tragedy, unfolding itself in its striking acts, but piecework, and thereby of itself barren, in mysticism cold and without effect.

The congregations no longer saw Christ pictured forth before their eyes as though crucified in their midst. Piecewise was narrated what every one knew and what interested no one, and the art that quickens pale narrative into newness of life, was lacking, because feeling remained unmoved, imagination did not operate, and, to speak with Da Costa our poet, heroic courage did not understand its task.

If now this volume ventures, in old style again, to offer passion-meditations to the churches, let no one think that we presume to deem ourselves capable of working our escape from the atmosphere that oppresses every one of us.

All we attempt to do is, to offer some resistance, and, be it only from a distance, to point back to the right path.

This speaks in the title we have chosen. Not of all Jesus' sufferings do you find meditative thinking here, but only of "His decease at Jerusalem". He suffered "from the beginning of His incarnation, all the days of His life upon earth, but particularly at the end", and only of that end do you here find the rejoinder in heart and mind.

On Tabor begins the shifting. Here glistens the heightened glory, and it is by this heavenly splendor, that the dark shadow of Golgotha shows itself, and, as the Evangelist narrates, under this contrast Moses and Elijah told Jesus of the decease, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem.

And from this viewpoint, in every scene of suffering here meditated upon, Christ remains the center, the suffering of Christ the leading motive.

Therefore in between the main scenes, returns are made to Psalm twenty-two and other lyric utterances of the soul of the Messiah. Only from the sentiment of Jesus, as He Himself felt and endured His suffering, can our fellow-feeling borrow depth, warmth and direction.

On the heart that thirts after higher peace, nothing operates with an effect so moving, so touching, so kindling of higher love, as a sinking away in the fathomless depth of the suffering and the dying of the Godman.

Whether these Meditations, as their purpose is, shall bring more than one of our brethren or sisters to their knees at the Cross of Golgotha, in this tense mood and with such blessed result, is a matter to be decided by those who ponder them after us.

If such might be the case, then let in this also a fruit be glorified, not of what we meditated, but of the incomparable Cross.

KUYPER.

Amsterdam, November, 1900.

It would be difficult to add anything to the noble foreword to these "Meditations" by the Author himself.

All that need be said, is, that gratitude to God, for His gift to the Church of Christ in the earth, of the consecrated life and labors of the late Dr. Kuyper, together with the desire, that more of God's people might share the benefit of it, has been the urge under the pressure of which the cutting of an English dress for these "Meditations" has been attempted by the

TRANSLATOR.

Walpole, Massachusetts.
January, 1928.

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I.

THE DECEASE WHICH HE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH

THE Transfiguration in the Mount is the advance play of light, that brings out the more strikingly the deep dark shadow of the suffering of the Messiah. It is the reality of the heavenly glory, that shines out for a moment, to make, as by contrast, the full reality of the passion of the Man of Sorrows tangible.

It requires no effort on our part to take this as the heart of the matter, for the Gospel narrative itself states that such is the case. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9, 30, 31).

In the holy mount, writes Peter (2-1, 16) we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, and, from this Mount the Divine signal is given, that, with heaven and earth as spectators, the awful drama of the dying of the Son of God is to begin.

Moses and Elias appear to the Man of Sorrows as messengers of God, and all we learn from them, is, that they tell Him of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

The connection therefore is not a point of question. This interlinking of glory and sorrow is a fact. The Transfiguration in the Mount is the prelude to Golgotha.

It is the first "sign of the Son of Man" pointing to the cross on which He is to die, even as presently a second time "the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen, when He returns in glory.

But as then it shall be the sign that His glory is about to appear in all its fulness, so here it was the sign, that the fulness of death and of curse was about to be poured out upon Him.

As in olden times in cities and towns bells were rung from every steeple, whenever gallows were erected, so here the ringing of the bells of heaven is heard, to cast the seriousness of Golgotha upon all hearts.

From the Mount the tiding goes forth, that Golgotha is at hand.

It affects one strangely however, that this announcement of His decease at Jerusalem is not made to the world, and not to Israel, not even to the apostles in the fulness of their number, but to Jesus Himself alone, and that only three of His disciples are eyewitnesses to the fact, that Moses and Elias announce to Him His suffering and death. The "sign of suffering" if we may say so, the sign of the Lamb of God, that shall be slain, remains hidden from the eyes of those who stand outside, and rather than have it proclaimed from the Mount to the world, Jesus charges His disciples not to tell any man what they had seen, as long as He is not risen from the dead.

This affects one the more strangely, because involuntarily one asks himself, whether there was any part of the drama of suffering that was at hand, that Jesus Himself did not know. He Who presently on the way to Emmaus expounds the Scriptures to His disciples, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, shows them, that the Christ had to suffer all these things, and thus enter into His glory, had least need, that the decease which He should accomplish

at Jerusalem, should expressly, and in such an impressive way, be announced to Him by Moses and Elias.

That the disciples had need of so solemn an announcement, you understand. When even a Peter had to be rebuked with a "Get thee behind Me, Satan", because he would not believe the tragic end of Jesus' appearance, you can imagine that a miracle like this of the Mount was necessary to profoundly impress them with the seriousness and the unpreventableness of the coming suffering.

And yet from everything connected with it, it is evident, that this was *not* the purpose of the transfiguration. The "sign of Golgotha" there appears, not that the world might take notice of it, and not that the disciples might give up all doubt, but for Jesus' own sake.

To Him, and not to the disciples is announced by Moses and Elias, the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Presently the word shall be spoken from the Cross: *"It is finished;"* here in the Mount, Moses and Elias speak of a decease which *He must* accomplish.

Does this not show, that in the Mount it was least of all the announcement of a suffering which was unknown to Jesus, but rather, that it tended to complete the impression of the reality of the coming suffering in the self-consciousness of Jesus?

Do not forget, that Jesus' human consciousness did not at once appropriate into itself what Divine knowledge there was in Him.

Of course as Son of God the knowledge of the Messiah was equal to the Father's knowledge and that of the Holy Ghost's. But in the case of Jesus,

the human consciousness did not lose thereby its human character, and the character of our human consciousness is, that only by degrees, only gradually, only by a steady ripening does it enter into the full impression of things. Do we not read of Jesus that He increased in wisdom and grace?

Hence though we reverently confess, that the Divine knowledge of Christ was perfect and not susceptible to further completion, yet it must be maintained, that with His human consciousness Jesus did not enter, except gradually, into the full sense of what awaited Him, and thus likewise of His suffering.

He knew that He had to suffer all these things, that He had to go into death and pass under the curse, but it was still something wholly different, so to know all this, and so to sense it beforehand, that the impression of that suffering and dying was in advance received by Him.

And therefore when prophecy instructs Him what suffering awaited Him, it is not the same, as when in the Mount, with the heightened receptivity with which the consciousness of life exalted in glory enriched Him, Moses and Elias hold before Him that all this suffering must be *accomplished* to the death.

It still entangles us in riddles why the realtity of Golgotha was indispensable. Had not Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Israel, a David and an Isaiah, already obtained justification? Was not theirs also the faith in the coming Messiah? If then they had already entered among the company of just men made perfect, without the reality of Golgotha having materialized, why could not like grace be shown unto us, even though Golgotha were ever deferred,

at length deferred to the end of the world, and thereby of itself have become superfluous?

Entire willingness to suffer was evident in the Messiah, could not then God, taking the will for the deed, have waived the demand of death, and still have reconciled and forgiven us in Christ?

If indeed there was entire willingness on the part of Jesus to make the sacrifice, why should His blood itself have to be shed?

Did it all depend upon the shedding of that blood? Was reality here indispensable? Must all that bitter suffering actually be accomplished? Not for our sakes, that we might see it, but for God's sake, that there might be reconciliation?

Thus the snare presents itself to our meditation, a snare braided from the tangled threads of the doubts of our heart.

We can argue with ourselves and others that sin brought with it the punishment of death, and that to redeem us, Jesus had to suffer death for us and in our stead. But when sacrificial willingness to die is perfect, what does the disposition of the heart still lack, and what benefit has God from that shedding of the blood?

And against this snare of doubt the Transfiguration is the protest.

No, God is not concerned about *arguments* regarding the atonement, but about the *reality* of it. Therefore, from the Mount, once more, the Divine ordinance goes forth, that this suffering of death must not merely be accepted and willed, but must actually be *accomplished.*

It all depends upon that reality. Abstraction, the representation of things in thought, analysis in

our processes of thinking, the imagination of faith avails here nothing.

Surely, thinking explains life, but it is therefore by no means yet real life that is explained, and what you think or represent to yourself, amounts to nothing, unless before or afterward actual reality corresponds to it.

In the thought of God the world was from all eternity. But this was not enough. From the Divine thought that world had to pass over into reality, and this was the Creation.

God Himself is not merely a fulness of thought, but He *is*. He lives. His is the essence of all essences.

He created our human life in full reality. Everything in the world which first moves in hidden places presently comes out in full reality. Hence, the atonement could not remain pending in the world of thought, but must come out in full reality and be *accomplished*. They who were saved in the Old Covenant, believed in what should be accomplished. We who are born after Jesus, believe in what *is* accomplished. But the *actual accomplishment* must lie in between.

The Messiah is not merely *called* the Lamb of God, but He *is* the Lamb of God, and therefore as the Lamb of God He must in all reality be *slain*.

Only by this reality does the atonement pass over from the realm of possibility into the realm of truth.

And it is this *reality*, this full reality of the coming suffering and death, that under the effulgence of the glistening antithesis of glory and curse, is brought to Jesus in the Mount.

It was an act of love on the part of the Father, in behalf of the Only-Begotten One, whom He had given to the world.

This transition in the Mount from the realm of thought into the full impression of the reality reflects its seriousness upon us.

One day you will die. You know it. You do not deny it. You accept this your lot and are ready to suffer it. But do you truly enter into the reality of your own coming death and do you realize it to the full?

One day you will be carried out to the grave, and separated from the body, in simple existence as soul, you will await the ressurection of the body. And this, too, you know and confess. But in your perception has it become real to you?

You believe in reconciliation. And confessing your faith in the atonement, you speak of Golgotha, and of what the Man of Sorrows there endured. But has your soul ever come under the full impression of what that atonement and that suffering is, not as a dogma and not as an image of the imagination, but in reality?

You believe in an eternal life, in a world far richer and more glorious than this world. You call yourself a pilgrim. You glory in the blessedness which God preserves for His elect as an incorruptible good. But has all this become real to you? Has all this passed over for you from the realm of thought into the full reality?

You well know the difference between representation and reality. He who is a-thirst, and first pictures the sight of water to himself, and then comes to the fountain and actually drinks the water, sweetly and gloriously tastes the difference.

Do you know this difference, when you lift up your mind and soul to eternal things? In your estimation does the life of heaven which is with God weigh in its full reality?

II.

WHATSOEVER THY COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE

NO veil hid from Jesus the suffering that awaited Him. He knew all that was to come! The mitigation of distress, which lies in ignorance of what the future holds, has not comforted the Savior in His passion.

In His case it was, step by step, with inexorable impelling force, a going down into the depths of distress and misery; and with this descent to the very bottom, He clearly saw before Him, all the distress and misery which He was to endure.

The pains of death have accompanied the Man of sorrows all the days of His life. And however much it seemed at times, that a friendly ray of sunlight fell across His path of life, and human joy surrounded Him, the somber pall of the doom and curse which He had taken upon Himself, ever hung before His all-penetrating eye across His whole existence.

Nothing would happen, save what God's counsel had determined beforehand to be done (Acts 4, 28). And everything that had been determined in that counsel stood in clear outline before His consciousness.

When His disciples have no thought of suffering, and dare to speak of a throne in Jerusalem, and of twelve thrones for themselves in the city of David, it is Jesus Who must impart to them the knowledge of His suffering, and tell them, that He must be delivered into the hands of sinners, and must suffer many

things, and must be crucified, always under the stress of that sacred *must*, because it had so been determined in God's counsel.

And when Simon, Jonas' son, thinks this is impossible, and exclaims: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee;" to Jesus this is a word as though Satan had whispered it.

It has all been determined before! And thou, Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou say, that this must by no means be?

There was something unspeakably tragic in that fact that it had all been determined before.

There was no escape from it. Even though Jesus did battle all His life long, even though He failed in no single temptation, even though He carried out to the full the glorious program of Psalm 40: "Behold, I come to do Thy will." All this availed nothing, and could avail nothing. For that very doing of the will of the Father implied first, and most of all the drinking of that cup of sorrow.

No drop would be added to it. No drop could be spared.

God Himself had mixed this cup. With infinite compassion He had determined in His counsel beforehand all the drops that must needs be poured into this cup of woe. As God had filled it, so that cup stood. And Immanuel had spoken: I shall drink it to the dregs. And then He had come to earth, and all His life long had had that cup in view, until at length He came to Gethsemane.

And then He trembled and His soul became "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). That terrible cup of woe! O God, must I drink it? Can it pass from me! But no, the cup did not pass

away. It remained standing before Him in the path along which He had to go. The cup full to the brim. And then Jesus prayed: Not my will, but Thy will be done. Thy counsel, according to all that Thou hast determined before!

And then Jesus drank that cup with great carefulness. No drop must be spilled on the ground.

Hence His cry from the Cross: *"It is finished."* Hence those continuous annotations that He must suffer this thing also, and also again that, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Yea, that at length it reads, "That the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith: I thirst" (John 19:28). And that finally when the whole program of suffering had been enacted, it reads: "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, said: It is finished."

All that had been determined before, had been included by the prophets in the program of His passion. Hence, that the Scripture must be fulfilled, and that all must be accomplished which had been determined before, is *one* thought!

Determined before!

But not arbitrarily. No, it had been determined in the counsel of the Lord, and all that counsel is wisdom seven times refined.

And therefore this "determined before" has a still deeper significance than that *the Scripture* must be fulfilled, for it also says that God's *righteousness* must be fulfilled.

God's right had been violated.

God's right demanded satisfaction. And that violated right had been given a hearing in the counsel of the Lord. And what according unto right was

determined in that counsel, to restore our righteousness to us, Immanuel has suffered in our stead.

So from what was deplete of comfort, comfort was born for Immanuel.

He knew that nothing could be deleted from it. No veil hid the awful future from Him. He was not merely a few days under sentence of death, but all His life was lived as it were in the prospect of death.

That was the disconsolateness of Him Who was not comforted.

But on the stem of God's counsel, in which everything had been determined before, a flower blossomed of sweet consolation.

It was all *determined,* so that it had its bounds. Nothing could be deleted, but likewise nothing could be added to it. No Sanhedrin or Herod, no rough soldier or slanderous priest could heighten the measure of His suffering. To this sea of sorrows also, the Lord had put a bound, which its waters could not pass.

More yet, in that "determined before" and "determined according to righteousness" lay the sweet of compassion.

For a claim that is met, liberates, and grants free exit. And with every pain which Jesus suffered in the anguish of His soul, He overheard the breaking of a chain, which liberated again another of His elect. With every deeper plunge into the stream of sorrow, it was a louder jubilation in the song of the redeemed, to whom life came from the shedding of His blood.

In brief, just because it had been "determined before" it was not a falling into the power of the suffering, into the abyss of sorrow, into the bands of mortal misery, but it was always a falling into the

hand of the Lord, even though that hand held the most awful cup before Him.

And thus in this pregnant word there discloses itself at the same time a fellowship between His suffering and yours, between the Cross which He has endured in your behalf, and the cross which, as you follow Him, you may gladly carry after Him.

For to this cross it also applies: No arbitrariness, but determined before. Not a falling into human power, but into the hand of the Lord. According to all that has been determined before.

If you did not know this; if everything floated as it were upon uncertainty; if a mysterious power from every side lay in wait for you to destroy you, where would your peace be, and where your hiding place?

But now that you know this, now that you confess that not a hair of the head of God's child can be hurt, except as it has been determined before, now you lift up your head on high with enthusiasm, with hope in your God.

For now *your* suffering also has a limit.

A boundary that shall not be crossed.

It shall be well with you, if to that limit you may carry your cross, *looking unto your Lord.*

III.

AS A PREPARATION FOR MY BURIAL

WORD and EMBLEM serve one purpose, but they differ slightly and operate differently. Holy Scripture is full of emblems. Already in Paradise we are told of a "tree of life". Holy prophets were constantly commanded by God to appear before the people with emblems of pitcher and girdle, baskets of figs, and what not. In His parables and outside of them, Jesus Himself almost as a rule speaks in allegorical language. Our Savior instituted for His church of all ages the emblematic signs of His Sacraments. And when on Patmos the perspective into eternity discloses itself, it is in emblem after emblem that the glory of heaven depicts itself before us.

The emblem is not added to the Word of God, but is a part of it. In emblems also speaks the Lord.

When in the hour of creation the word went forth, there did not originate ideas, but *things;* and in these things there lay a speech of God, since God has expressed His thoughts in them. There was a speech of the heavens in the firmament. In Psalm 29:7, the lightning itself is called "the voice of the Lord". And Psalm 19 tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

The whole creation is *one* emblem, one mighty exhibition of the thoughts of the Lord. Hence the whole world has symbolical significance. Wedlock is image of what unites the church as bride to the heavenly Bridegroom; the vine is image of what

Jesus is to His believing people; the shepherd is the image of God's providencial care of His people; leaven, light, fountain, are altogether images of what is holy, and bring it closer to us.

Jesus therefore indulges only rarely in abstract reasoning, but almost always portrays the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven in symbolical language.

Emblems are the source of the life of poets. He who is eloquent and moves audiences, of himself abandons abstract ideas, and uses figurative speech.

The language of the rank and file of people borrows its riches from the emblem. With everything that is solemn and means to be impressive, the aid of the symbol is invoked.

The metaphor grips the senses. It calls up a life-image before them. And in that life-image as in a mirror, spiritual reality addresses you.

You see it, you grasp it, and it grips you, far more strongly and effectively than the most sharply outlined, the most finely analyzed concept.

Is it strange, therefore, that the holiest drama which this world has ever beheld, the passion and death of the Son of God, is emblematically introduced, and consecrated by *sacred anointing?*

That woman knew not what she did. She did not understand that she was God's instrument to mark the solemn beginning of the going to the slaughter on the part of the Lamb of God. She acted from the impulse of sacred devotion. Jesus had become precious to her. The whole mystery of Jesus' person had gripped her. Jesus had become the Master of her soul. And without explaining to herself how, in that wondrous Rabbi of Nazareth, she had found eternal peace. Now she wanted to do something for

Jesus. She wished to do Him honor. For Him must be the best, the choicest, the richest that her house affords. A bottle, an alabaster box of unadulterated nard. A fortune for those days. A capital, we would say. And as the thought presents itself, the resolve is made. That nard is consecrated to Him. With this alabaster box she hastens to the house, where she knows that Jesus is. And quickly reaching Him, she breaks the box, and empties its precious content, pouring it out upon the object of her holy love. The precious, fragrant oil evaporated in the process of outpouring. It bathed Jesus as in a sphere of sweet-smelling ether. The fragrant vapors diffused themselves throughout the whole room where Jesus sat. Each guest drank in the spicy perfume. And while the whole company felt itself gripped, Jesus is the center of that outpouring, evaporating fragrance. And the woman, standing by with her empty box, is overjoyed. She has glorified her Lord.

Had she a surmise of Jesus' end? Nothing indicates it. Jesus' own word: "She did this as a preparation for my burial," first brings this anointing into relation with the passion of the Lord (Matt. 26:12, Dutch version).

Even if she acted under a premonition, she has not understood half of the deep significance of her act. It was God the Lord who inspired the deed in her heart, it was the impulse of the Spirit which caused her to perform it. Hence it was not that woman, but it was God the Lord who *through that woman* emblematically introduced the passion and death of Christ.

Jesus understood what this symbolical anointing signified. He saw its sacred, impressive meaning.

To Him it was the consecration of the holy Lamb of God to the sacrifice.

As in the anointing He was for a moment hid in sweet-smelling vapors, so presently the earth would hide Him in its womb, with the glory of resurrection as prophecy.

"She hath wrought a good work upon me," spake Jesus, under the violent emotions which must have taken hold on Him. This anointing consecrates your Savior to the grave.

Of the grave and of the resurrection this anointing was the double emblem. That outpouring was the emblem of death. That rise of sweet-smelling savor was the emblem of a new, a glorious life.

If Jesus were still in Bethany, from all regions they would come, who would spend ten times as much, to bring an honor to Jesus like that of the anointing. It can not be guessed what treasures from all peoples and nations would be brought together, to perform so solemn an act of homage to the Savior of the world.

But now it would have no such value. To come out for Jesus, to offer Jesus homage, now that the "travail of His soul" lies behind Him, after He has been "very highly exalted", by the Father, and angel-song and human-psalm vie to make His praises rise in worship, in this the art of holy love does not celebrate its triumph. But to pour out that costly nard upon Jesus, when Judas was scheming His betrayal, when the disciples began to doubt, and the might of the world was preparing itself, to lay Him in the dust of death, that was the glorious virtuosity of love, that was for her who was privileged to perform it a

drinking in of blessedness on earth, and for Jesus it was a sweet refreshment of soul.

Why was this allotted to that otherwise forgotten woman, and not to you? Here is the unlimited power of the Father. Here is the election of grace. Mary chosen to carry her Savior in her womb, John chosen to lay his head on the bosom of Jesus, and this woman chosen, to anoint Jesus for His burial.

All this allows no repetition. These are sacred privileges only allotted to a few. To God alone belonged the disposition.

But the honor of being permitted to do it, the privilege of being made worthy for it, was above all measure precious. Jesus Himself declared that this deed, the glorious privilege of this woman, should be memorialized throughout the whole world.

And yet, if you might envy her, you would envy her, not for seeing your fame go abroad, but for having been permitted to perform so glorious a ministry, in such a crucial moment, to your Lord.

That has been the glory for this woman.

And therefore she still jubilates, she will jubilate forever: "I have been permitted to anoint my Savior as a preparation for His death."

Now consider what Judas, the traitor, said. Although this too was done under higher appointment.

He spoke of the poor. Not in behalf of the poor, but because that honor, shown to Jesus, cut his troubled conscience, troubled by his scheming treachery.

But this much remains, Jesus took him at his word, and announced to His own throughout all ages: "The poor ye have always with you."

And that word also Jesus' church has understood.

Since she was not able like this favored woman to anoint Jesus in person, with something of the passion of her love in the heart, she has offered her gifts to Jesus in His poor.

Christian charity is the enthusiastic turning into money the costly nard *for Jesus' sake.*

You, therefore, who would envy that woman, forget not your Savior's poor. Pass them not by, whom He has left to your care.

Said He not: "In so much as ye have done this to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done this unto Me"?

IV.

THE HAND THAT DIPPETH WITH ME IN THE DISH

ALREADY the Psalmist of old had complained: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." And this is what moved Christ so deeply in the base betrayal by Judas. Not merely to be delivered, but to be betrayed, and that, not by a distant acquaintance, not by one who had walked along and had merely followed Him from afar, but by one of His most intimate friends, by a chosen disciple, by a man who daily ate bread with Jesus from the same dish, and after the custom of those days, dipped the bread in the self-same dish of fruit-juice.

We do not deny, that this dipping into the dish by Jesus and Judas must have taken place at the same moment, but it must have been unobserved, so that Jesus and Judas understood, but not the others who sat at table with them; even as in the general conversation, to Judas' question, "Lord, is it I?", Jesus' answer, "Thou hast said", must have been lost to the rest. How else are we to account for the fact that Peter and the ten other disciples should have allowed Judas freely to go out, and to have made no attempt to frustrate his plan? In the main, therefore, we accept the marginal reading (in the Dutch Bible). This saying of the dipping into the dish harks back to David's bitter complaint in Psalm 41:9, and in this striking word Jesus expressed the bitterness of what on account of this also His heart suffered.

Sitting together at table was at that time more truly than now the expression of solidarity: open acknowledgement of fellowship, a tie that united those sitting down as members of one family, as pupils of one master, as friends of the same social class.

They who in direct succession belong together as members of one family eat daily at one table, of one bread, from the selfsame dish. And as often as friends or acquaintances imitate this sitting down at one family-board, they enter into a closer fellowship, which finds its presage in the blood-relationship.

This unity is furthermore represented even in the oneness of food. As Paul speaks at the Lord's Supper of *one bread,* so from the nature of the case in the constant renewal of the life-blood of many by one selfsame food lies a solidarity, which shows itself even in the feeding of the body.

There is always treachery, though the tie be less intimate, when for the sake of working some one's ruin, you abuse the knowledge which you have acquired, by having been admitted into the narrower circle.

But this treachery becomes the more heinous as the character is the more intimate, that marked the fellowship of traitor and victim.

The weaker this tie, the less wickedness it takes to commit treachery.

But if this tie was close and personal, and fellowship has been of a very tender nature, then treachery acquires a degree of such dreadful wickedness of heart, that heaven calls for vengeance, and earth is horrified.

In the case of Judas, the fellowship with Jesus

could not have been more intimate. He was *always* with Jesus. Daily he sat at table with Him. In the Master's narrowest circle, he was not merely admitted, but adopted. Christ's own disciple. One of the small number: twelve. The confidant of Jesus' fellowship and conversation. The man from whom Jesus held nothing back.

And therefore, there was not merely treachery here, but treachery of the most heinous sort. Treachery that was bound to affect Jesus most bitterly. A revelation of human degeneracy, which brought all fidelity and friendship into doubt. A poisoned dagger thrust into the purest heart.

Jesus' judgment of Judas therefore exceeds in intensity everything He ever said of His enemies.

For the ruffians who nail Him to the cross He still prays: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

To the man who was so inconceivably to deny Him with oaths, three times, Jesus says: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

But with Judas all compassion dissolves itself in the terrible woe upon the man, for whom not to have been born would have been preferable. And yet, upon Judas also there is no call for vengeance from Jesus' lips. Even in Gethsemane it still is: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Even with regard to Judas, Jesus shudders inwardly as He thinks of his doom. But grace is here cut off. Here the waters of unrighteousness have risen too high. Before Jesus' eye nothing hangs over Judas save dark, black night. In spirit Jesus already sees him going out to hang himself, and .....?

That He might save us children of men from sin,

Jesus was bound to let human sin assail from its deepest depth His person, His life, in the most violent manner.

And the foaming of the poisonous waters of sin from their deepest caverns has not been witnessed at Golgotha, not at Gabbatha, not in the Sanhedrin, not even in the persons who taunted Jesus on the cross, but in Gethsemane, when Judas betrayed the Son of man with a kiss.

And therefore the moment when Jesus measured the abyss, which gaped between Him and sin, most anxiously, and in His holy heart felt the terrible assault of consummated sin most cruelly, was, when it stood between Him and Judas.

Judicial murder is terrible, but treachery far more cruelly stabs the heart.

Yet you need not on this account take Judas as a miscreant who, by his inhuman malice, stands apart from you and your race.

Inclination leans this way, and in the face of so base an outrage as this, it is difficult to think that here you deal with a man like yourself, as involuntarily you take him to be more *devil* than *man*. But the story of the Gospel does not countenance this popular aversion, which dismisses Judas as a demon, and scorns association with a traitor such as he.

For though in the end Satan entered Judas' heart, he himself was no devil, but a man such as you, and he who had met Judas in close company of our Lord and the other disciples, would in no way have surmised that this man of such seeming piety would be capable of such shame.

Judas had felt himself drawn toward Jesus. He had left all to follow Jesus. He had closely united

himself to Jesus. When at Capernaum many had ceased from following after Jesus, he had continued faithful. Not merely among the seventy, but among the little group of twelve he had been adopted. Three long years he had persevered in following Jesus. With the other eleven he had been sent forth to preach the gospel to the cities of Judah. To make Jesus known and to win people for Jesus he had travelled up and down the land. He had done signs and wonders in Jesus' name. Even the money-bag of the sacred company had been confided to him. And on no gospel-page in the narrative of those long years is the record of one deed, one word of Judas, from which it can be inferred, that at sight he differed from the other disciples. Only at the end John hints at thievery, and that was in connection with Judas' appeal for the poor.

Without doubt, therefore, had you met Judas with the rest, you would not have surmised anything wrong with him, and you would have been impressed, that in Judas you greeted a devout and faithful follower of our Lord.

And rather than that Judas' appearance would have roused aversion in you, you would have approached him reverently, and because of his friendly attachment to Jesus you would have felt attached to him.

Such is the Judas of history, who has nothing in common with the current representation of legend.

Jesus had understood him from the first, for He knew what was in man, but in daily intercourse nothing was known of this, not even to Judas himself.

And do not say that Judas expected of Jesus the

founding of an earthly kingdom, and that his spiritual inclination toward Jesus was led astray by ambition after earthly greatness. For this was the case with *all* the disciples till the end. The purely spiritual kingdom was not understood by one of them.

Between them and Judas the only difference was that *his* worldly ambition was stimulated and made more evil by the antithesis with the spiritual, while with the rest of the disciples it was tempered by the glow of Jesus' spiritual greatness, and in the end extinguished.

When in the deepest depth of your being spiritual greatness does not interest you, unobservedly it begins to offend you, to irritate you, to quicken your dislike, and in the end to waken in your soul opposition and enmity.

This is seen with the martyrs, whose spiritual, heroic courage made their henchmen more cruel than they were.

Under this psychological reaction Judas also succumbed.

In the end he could no longer tolerate Jesus. In his heart hatred of Jesus' spiritual greatness burst into flame. A hatred, such as finally spared nothing. And what went on in that heart and spake in that evil Judas-eye, when in Gethsemane he approached Jesus, and pressed a kiss upon the holy face, human language refuses to express.

But thus, Judas stands no longer before you, as a man, whom you disdainfully dismiss, saying: "Go out from me, I am holier than thou." No, this wicked, this evil Judas comes to stand close by your side, to say to you, that in your own human heart there

hides the germ of the same wickedness which brought him to this final act of hellish malice.

So Judas was like Peter, like John and Nathaniel. He associated with them, sat at table with them, and no one observed anything uncommon about him. And when Jesus said that one of them would betray Him, no one thought of Judas and said: "That must be he." On the contrary, they asked: "Lord is it I?"

Do not say that this is enough to make you afraid of yourself. For when you are afraid of yourself, it shows that you have knowledge of yourself, and fear of the sin that dwells within you.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

And more than one of those who were ever at ease in Sion, who readily railed at Judas, but were never afraid of themselves, have been first to come to this fall.

Psychologically not accurate, but strikingly true, it has been said: A wild beast dwells in your inmost self, and Satan incites it time and again, to rend and to destroy you.

And he alone is safe, who has an open eye to this wild beast in his own heart, and knowing that he carries it within himself, is on the *watch* and *prays* and *strives against it.*

V.

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD COMETH

THERE is something deeply humiliating to your sense of human goodness in the fact that the question, who the real prince of this world is, is answered by your Savior as many as four times: "the prince, the head, the king of this world is not your God, nor His Anointed One, nor yet yourself, but *Satan.*"

This has often been misunderstood, and it has been represented as though Jesus thereby indicated that Satan was appointed by God as "prince of this world".

Of this, of course, there is no mention.

No, when your Savior, the nearer He makes His approach to the Cross, points out with ever greater emphasis, that the prince of this world is Satan, He states the condition as it *actually* is.

He does not say: "Satan is the prince of this world *by right*"; neither also: "Satan *must* remain the prince of this world until I succeed him on the throne."

What Jesus declares amounts to this: As a matter of fact, which it will not do to deny, Satan *is* the prince of this world, as now, that I am on the way to the Cross, becomes for the first time clearly evident.

There is a world; in that world there are people; among the people of this world there rules a certain spirit; that ruling spirit strikes the upper key; whatever rises up against this spirit or resists it, in the end abandons the attempt; and this ruling spirit which restlessly triumphs in this world of men and

represses every resistance and oppresses it, is not the spirit of God, but always *the spirit of Satan.*

Satan is too strong for you, and you, O child of man, fallen away from God, inclined by nature to hate God and your neighbor, and incapable of doing any saving good, you put Satan continually in the right over against your God, even against your will; and deeming that you strive in your own behalf and not in that of Satan's, you strengthen his forces and allow him the victory.

Thus in fact here upon earth, in your world of men, not your spirit, not the spirit of your God, but very positively the spirit of Satan rules.

You do not let God be King, you yourself are no prince in the earth; no, whatever you may think or say, the prince, the head, the ruler in this world of men is no one else than Satan.

Now consider carefully that our Savior does not state this as a fact at the beginning of His ministry, but only at its close.

First in John 12:31, and then in John 14:30 and 16:11, occurs this title of Satan, which so deeply puts us men to shame.

From this you clearly see that this terrible name for Satan is directly connected *with the decease which Jesus had to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Only on the way which leads through Gethsemane to Golgotha did Satan become manifest as the prince of this world.

For this reason, on the way to Gethsemane, Jesus said to His disciples: "I will no more talk much with you, for now the prince of this world cometh." (John 14:20).

If you ask whether Satan had not stood before

as prince of this world over against Jesus, we reply: that this in part is true.

Already in the wilderness, at the temptation, Satan had said to Jesus: "All this power and the glory of *these kingdoms* will I give Thee; for to me they have been given, and I give them to whom I will. If then Thou wilt fall down and worship me, it shall all be thine."

And yet this is still somewhat *different,* and somewhat *less,* than what is implied in Jesus' saying, that Satan actually appears to be *the prince of this world.*

Somewhat *different,* for the giving away of the kingdoms outside of Israel was in Satan's power only because the transition of dominion in Asia, Africa and Europe had thus far almost always taken place by criminal cunning and unscrupulous violence, and thus under Satan's inspiration.

But also somewhat *less.* For at the temptation in the wilderness Satan truly appears as the one who has authority over the kingdoms of the heathen; but always yet with *the exception of Israel;* and hence only in the political domain, but not definitely yet in the heart of the nations.

Also after the temptation in the wilderness the call still goes out to Israel to bend the knee before God's anointed King, and to the multitude and to the priests, in the face of Pilate and Herod, to decide for Jesus as against Satan.

Now that on the other hand the question is to be settled, and neither Gethsemane nor Golgotha can be averted, now it becomes evident, that Satan wields power not only over heathen nations but also over Israel; and also that in Israel he has seduced not merely the judicial authority of Pilate and Herod, but has so dominated the *people* and its priests by

his spirit, that everything arrays itself against the Anointed of God, jostles Him to the Cross, hangs Him on the accursed tree, invokes His blood upon themselves and upon their children, and in this last and ascending act of the insanity of sin, renders Satan's dominion over *the whole world,* Israel included, complete.

And was this not so?

Who but Satan bare rule in that dreadful hour of darkness, when on the accursed tree our Savior bled to death?

Among the nations the very remembrance of the knowledge of God had been lost, and was retained in Israel alone.

As righteous retribution for its apostacy and sin, Israel had come under the power of heathen Rome, and in Herod Edom, i. e. Esau, bare rule again over the children of Jacob.

Not alone among the nations, but even among the very people of God, sin and unrighteousness had played official authority into the hand of a Pilate and a Herod, both representatives of a world-power, which was not led and dominated by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of Satan.

The only small place in the world that had still been able to resist the power of Satan and to contest with him absolute authority over the world of men, was Galilee and Judea and the Trans-Jordanic, where the people, at least the rank and file, together with the order of the holy priesthood of Aaron, could still have entered protest against Satan, and made choice of Jesus.

And for one moment it seemed as though it would truly come to this.

Was it not to the very gate of Jerusalem that with Hosannas He was acclaimed as "Son of David"?

But in the end this too proved *semblance.*

At the moment of decision, with surprising swiftness Satan wins more and more ground, even in that little place, that only place in the world where thus far he still had been resisted.

The multitude departs and gives it up, and another crowd of people exclaim: "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The priests will presently rend their garments, to condemn Jesus as a blasphemer. They who will vex, insult and sneer at Him on the Cross, already feel the evil blood rise to their faces.

Even His own disciples are intimidated.

In Gethsemane they slumber. When He is arrested they flee. Peter denies Him thrice. And one of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscarioth, is he into whose heart Satan entered.

Confess, do you not see how hand over hand in that last hour Satan's power increased? How, just when it came to the crisis with Jesus, he conquered that last small territory of Israel, which was the only one that had thus far not been his?

Is it then not so, that now for *the first,* but thank God also for *the last time,* Satan could rejoice and jubilate with hellish delight, that he was the prince of the *whole* world, and that that *whole* world, up to its highest utterance, was not dominated by *God's* spirit, not by *man's* spirit, but by *his* spirit?

Thus it should needs be understood, that the poignancy of Jesus' struggle, the fearsome terror of soul and of His passion to the death may be faintly comprehended.

He, the Holy One, in His own person the

necessary means, to discover the *whole* world, in its apostacy from God, to itself.

Up to that hour there always was yet something, however little, on which man could lay hold; in which man could yet hope; to which man over against Satan could appeal.

All the rest of the world had fallen away from God, but in Israel His praises were still sung. Israel's inheritance was in heathen power, but on Sion the bleeding sacrifice remained yet smoking upon the altar of the Lord.

No, the world was not yet lost, it did not lie altogether under sentence before God, as long as on Sion there always were yet children of men, consecrated to Jehovah, to give Him praise and honor.

But now with this also it must come to the test, whether these offerings were made in spirit and in truth or merely in semblance and unreality.

The Anointed of God appears.

The Promise of the fathers is manifest in Israel.

He asks no offering in money or in property. He demands nothing for Himself. One thing only He proclaims, which is: the honor of His Father; and for one thing only does He ask, which is: the love, the surrender of the human heart.

What He asks is, that the multitude in Israel at least shall break itself loose from the bands, the works and the dominion of Satan.

And what is the answer?

Even this, that they *rejected* the Messiah; that they condemned the Anointed of God as a blasphemer; that they demanded His blood; that they put upon Him the curse; and did not rest until they had seen Him bleed and die upon the Cross.

Further than this nothing rested.

Sin had exhausted itself, apostacy had become complete. The contest *for* Satan as *against* Jehovah had in Golgotha been fought out to the finish.

In this terrible deed, the whole world cut itself off from God, and in that Cross has bowed the knee to Satan.

And the world would have perished, and would have sunk away in hellish corruption, if Jesus to His saying: "The prince of this world cometh", could not have added: "but he hath nothing in me."

For this was the mystery of godliness: Jesus carried the world in Himself.

The Word had become *flesh.*

He who died was the *man* Jesus Christ.

And because that *man* Jesus Christ did *not* bow the knee unto Satan, but defied the curse of eternal death, at the Cross of Christ Satan suffered defeat.

VI.

ALL THY WAVES AND THY BILLOWS

OUR suffering is known unto the Lord our God, but not the suffering of Jesus unto us.

As the hairs of our head, so also are our tears counted by God. And when it says that God collects them in His bottle, the saying implies a Divine Compassion, which not merely fathoms the depth of our suffering, but shall once translate the distress, that has been endured for His sake, into brightness and glory.

God knows *all* the suffering of His children. Not alone their tears, but even their sighings are not hid from Him. No best friend on earth understands our sorrow, as He knows and values it. No trouble can be so secretly borne in the quiet places of the heart, but He has weighed it out in His balance. Yea, when we are not conscious of anything save an unspeakable feeling of heaviness of heart, even then He has known our path and all the secrets of our soul's sorrow are naked and open before Him.

But in this way no man shall ever understand the suffering of the Son of God.

Truly, from the Cross goes out a heart-gripping, soul-stirring speech of bitter dissolution of soul and languishing of heart.

Though not able to say how or why, somehow our perception grasps, and our instinctive feeling divines, that in Gethsemane, on Gabbatha and on Golgotha, Jesus waded through depths of sorrow, such as has been witnessed nowhere else, such as no one

else has ever endured. But we cannot fathom it. To us it remains an impenetrable mystery.

When such a petition falls from His lips: "Father, let this cup pass"; when we overhear the complaint: "Now is my soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"; when He falls forward and the sweat of anguish oozes from Him as great drops of blood; when He moans: "I thirst"; and presently He cries out His Lama *Sabachthani* before His God, then it is as though from every depth a voice sounds saying, that to have Jesus utter such moans and cryings as these, there never can have been suffering so full of bitterness and anguish as that which He suffered.

And therefore we are not able to analyze this dreadful suffering. You can give yourself no account of it, and say: it was this or it was that.

Terrible is death by crucifixion, but there is still more terrible martyrdom conceivable. When you read in the book of martyrs of men who had the skin stripped off from the face and breast, and then were exposed near nests of wasps, and so much more as this black book of horrors has to relate, you would be dishonest at the bar of your own conscience if you did not agree that physically, so far as bodily pain is concerned, there has been suffering more bitter than that on Golgotha.

Hence it was not this.

Certainly it counted, and was a bitter part of it. But yet, if there had been nothing else in that cup except to die, as the murderer on the cross by the side of Him died, the suffering of our Lord would never have been suffering par excellence, the totality of all suffering, including all anguish in itself and very far surpassing all forms of agony on earth.

Yet such it was.

Hear it in that cry in Psalm 42: "O, My God, all thy waves and all thy billows are gone over me".

This was never so with any man.

This was not so with the Psalmist. What he sang, he truly sang of himself, but it deepened into the suffering of the Messiah. It was "the spirit of Christ which did signify in him and testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:11).

Two, three beats of the waves of the Lord upon our weary head would be enough for an ordinary child of man and more, too, to cause him to go under, so that he could no more raise himself above another wave-beat.

But *all* God's billows and *all* the waves of the Lord, what child of man could have held up his head under them, and against them have nerved the breast?

All the waves and *all* the billows of the Almighty is something so dreadful, so indescribable, that it cannot be put into words.

All the doing of the Lord is infinite, and infinite also are the undulations of the waves and billows of His wrath. Infinite is the ever new rising of other waves, and infinite is the endless wave-beat wherewith in all their breadth and length they are driven forth.

There boils and burns in those foaming billows a glow, a fearsome glow of eternal indignations.

You do not observe the beginning of them and can discover no limit or end to them.

To the sea, that causes her waves to break upon our shores, the Lord God hath appointed a bound, which it can not pass (Jer. 5:22).

But this ocean knows no such bound.

Its depths roar down in the abyss of eternal death.

What then spatters against the head are foam-flakes and drops. But the beat, the roaring beat of those billows, and the violence wherewith those waves tear everything away and push out everything before them, no, by everything that is holy, *this* no child of man has ever undergone.

For to endure this, was the depth of Jesus' sufferings.

The endless depth and infinite breadth in His languishing, was the impenetrable mystery of the sufferings, which have come upon the Man of sorrows.

He sank away in the abysses, and in these from afar He heard the roaring and the thundering of the violently moving waters. And He went on into the depths. And the waves and billows beat against the breast and upon the sacred head. It was wave upon wave; one billow had no sooner passed but the other was ready to follow.

Eternally deep, so that no man and no Angel could have further knowledge of it, or comprehend it, or in pity suffer with it.

So namelessly deep, that God alone could know it, and our Jesus Who endured it.

The whole burden of God's wrath against the sin of the whole human race.

Against your sins also, and against mine, and against the sins of our children.

O, Depth of compassion, that from such wrath, under which we should have had to pine away eternally, by grace salvation came.

But also, O depth of unholinesses, that the Son of man should have had to be immersed so deeply in the stream of curse and sore anguish, that even one sinner might be enabled to stand before the face of our Holy God.

VII.

PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY

PRAYER is an art. An holy art, which is very little known. An art which the Holy Spirit alone can teach, and which the Holy Spirit alone imparts to God's elect.

There is almost nothing conceivable, that is so much talked about and of which so much show is made, and which is so little actually achieved, as *real prayer.*

That the children of the world make light of this, one can understand. They do not grasp the deep nature of it. To them prayer is a pious gloss of the higher life. More than this they do not know about it. And it is only natural that they try their hand at it, whenever something needs to be stirred in the heart.

But it is still more a matter of regret, that Christian people also indulge in insincere extravagances along this line. This, too, is but all too true. So it is said, again and again, that special prayer has been made; or that someone shall pray for you; while another commends himself to your prayers. And the request: "Brethren, pray for us!" has become the almost stereotype ending to all sorts of addresses and writings, which, alas, as they lack genuineness, bring no results.

Christian people are so unspiritual.

For what do they mean by all this praying for one another? Do you not know that before you can pray for one, you must first have *laid him upon your heart?* That *love* for him must stimulate and inspire

you? That to be efficacious, intercession demands deep seriousness in prayer?

If therefore, in our prayers for others, we could be more sober, more quiet, more holy, and thereby more reverent and more tender, rather than harm, it would do our intercessions good.

But this conventional superficiality in the call: "Brethren, pray for me", is not the only sin that cleaves to our prayers.

There is also much sin in our prayer, in that we pray for ourselves with so much lack of seriousness.

Not that common prayer at meals, at rising or retiring, or in our public gatherings may therefore be neglected.

He who is thus minded, does not know the way of the Lord. And yet farther still from the Lord's way is he who has no eye to weep over the narrowness of our prayer and the low level of the invocation of the Lord in prayers which we pray together.

How much and how lengthy speech is made, when of the hundred and more in attendance who fold their hands there are scarcely ten who for one moment really lift up their soul to God. What heaviness there is and what dullness with such prayer! What scattering of mind and invasion of disturbing thoughts! Sometimes there are a thousand and more Christians together, and you see all heads bowed, and apparently all praying, yet so pitiful is our condition, that it is thankworthy when you are privileged to have activity of faith for half the length of the time of such common prayer.

In our private prayer, of course, this is not so bad.

He who by himself alone bends his knees is apt

to be more attentive, more collected in mind, more in the mood of prayer, and even then lack of seriousness remains the sin which over and over again cleaves unto us.

Thus from the midst of life at once to appear before God; at once to detach the soul from your surroundings; from a conversation that interested you deeply; from a book that you were reading; from a tiding that caused you concern; then, at once, without so much as a moment's pause, to be supplicating for the honor of God's Name and of His Kingdom ..... this, for a child of dust, who is also a poor sinner, requires indeed an almost superhuman effort; and therefore as we rise from prayer we are so often provoked with our own heart, that it was too distracted to make a close approach of soul unto the Holy One.

Earnestness enables one to exert himself; and to be able to pray earnestly a soul must be willing to make exertion.

In school a child must learn to exercise his mind. And it is a great gain, when at an early stage of education you can make a child center his attention upon the thing in hand, hold his attention in arrest, and for the sake of something worth while, make him exert himself.

And to such discipline we should subject ourselves also in this matter of prayer.

Take notice of Jesus in Gethsemane, even of Him it is written with so great emphasis: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44).

You feel, this can not imply that, especially at such a time as this, Jesus prayed at first without earnestness, without thought. But it does indicate

that also in prayer the Lord Jesus *purposely exerted* the soul, to pray the more fervently; and that, as the agony became more intense and violent, He made that exertion of His soul *the stronger,* in order to lie the more securely anchored in His Father.

Literally it reads that the Lord "prayed *with more outstretching of His soul*"; and this interprets with good right what earnestness in prayer is.

When some one speaks to you, or when some one looks at you, nothing annoys you more greatly, than that while speaking he is engaged with something else, and acts as though you were not there.

And such is the case in a far higher measure with the Lord God.

Our praying is a talking with the Eternal Being; this is not possible, except as the soul engages itself with Him; looks up to Him; seeks Him; goes out towards Him; and with this in view goes out from itself.

The more in prayer you remain *in yourself,* the worse you pray; and conversely, the more you get away from yourself, and go out toward God and are busy with Him, the more fervent will be the outpouring of your soul.

The soul must be *lifted up;* the soul must be *stretched out;* the soul must be *spread out* toward the throne of grace.

And therefore the stronger the outstretching of soul becomes, the higher your earnestness carries you, and the more your prayer obtains something of real prayer.

And this does not come about by a moment's thought, or by a sudden effort, but for sinful beings this is a matter of *practice.*

Even as you can impart a finer sharpness to your eye and to your ear and to the feeling of your fingertips by practice, so by practice you can discipline your soul to become capable of stronger spiritual exertion to pray.

Not of course, as though practice did it. Never this. The driving, the outgoing, the impulse and the glow in prayer, when it is real, is always the *work of the Spirit,* and occurs therefore provisionally seldom otherwise than in spiritual agony and struggle and temptation, when the conflict becomes so fierce, that from sheer terror we hold ourselves fast to the Eternal.

But he who has done much shooting with the arrow and has trained his fingers, aims more accurately and better hits the mark.

And so it is with the outgoing of our prayers toward the Almighty.

For this too the soul must have spiritual discipline, spiritual practice; the will to pray must sanctify and strengthen the impulse to pray; there must be earnestness to suppress everything that would disturb our prayer; there must be inclination and purpose with uplifting of soul to dwell in the tabernacle of our God.

A new beginner is not able to spend five minutes at one time in quiet private prayer. An initiated and practiced child of God can sometimes pray half an hour and more. Not because it consists in the length, but because in praying, the soul continues in prayer till she prays herself inside the blessed fellowship of her Lord.

And to spend each day one half hour in converse with the Holy One, should this be too much?

To this end the starting-point is "earnestness",

or as Luke literally calls it: power of soul to stretch itself up toward things on high.

First earnestly.

Then more earnestly.

And so prayer makes gains and becomes a blessedness of soul; an enjoyment of something that gives you walks above; a being hid in God's holy tent!

VIII.

COULD YE NOT WATCH WITH ME ONE HOUR?

IN JESUS' LIFE ALSO it was an upward and a downward course as between opposite poles.

At one time He avoids and shuns His disciples, that He might be alone all night in the mount in prayer. At another time solitude becomes so oppressive to Him, that He seeks repose in their company.

This by itself is an experience which is common to us all. When business has exacted too much from you, and your nerves are all unstrung, the presence of your most intimate friend becomes at length a burden, and you long for the moment that you can escape to your own room. On the other hand, when you were alone, and anxiety overcame you, and sudden fear struck you at the heart, your first impulse was to call for some one to come to you, or, when this was not possible, to escape from the loneliness, and to seek relaxation and diversion from your fears in the company of others.

This only affects us strangely when we learn of similar phenomena in the life of our Savior.

Worshipful reverence ever inclines to imagine Jesus as altogether superior to this change of emotions.

"When the heathen rage and the peoples imagine a vain thing, and the princes and kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and against His Anointed", then, as it reads in the Second Psalm, in the repose of His Majesty, God the Lord looks down, and with Divine satire scorns, and laughs at, this anger of Satan and his satellites.

And with something closely akin to this you would think, that your Savior should have faced the powers of curse and death.

As out of the whirlwind the Lord said to Job about the horse (39:22) that "he mocketh at fear", as you read of heroes in battle, that with utter contempt of death, they rush in upon the fire of the enemy, thus you could wish, that with Divine heroism your Savior would have triumphed over Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha and over the darkness of the grave.

If, however, you esteem the heroism of the soldier bathing himself in blood too unholy, than to look for it in the struggle of your Savior, at least you might have expected in Him the heroic faith of the martyr, a dying for God's sake with a psalm of praise upon His lips.

In the wilderness, at the temptation, Jesus comes up to this high-strung expectation. There He treads the winepress alone without a word of complaint on His lips. There He triumphs over Satan in three gripping stages, and when finally Satan departs from Him, it is the departure of the wounded tiger that slinks away before the majesty of the Lion.

But it is not *so* on Golgotha, it is especially not *so* in Gethsemane.

The "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me", even as the cry: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit", shows nothing of the courage of the hero as the dominant note of His temper of mind and heart. And when you see your Savior in Gethsemane almost succumb, so that it required an angel from heaven to strengthen Him, and the wish almost steals upon you, that this painful scene had

not occurred; you do not understand the prayer that "this cup might pass", even though there follows: "Not my will, but thy will be done"; and when at length your Savior returns to His disciples with the complaint: "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40) you can scarcely realize, however clearly it is stated, that your Savior uttered this complaint in all seriousness, and that He had truly need of the comforting presence of his disciples.

They who do not honor in Jesus "the Lamb of God", but the "martyr", at Gethsemane, become painfully confused.

With Stephen there was no momentary suggestion of succumbency. With him the face shone as with angel-brightness. And without so much as one word of complaint, he receives the rough-hewn stones, that are hurled at him, with a bearing in which nothing shows itself save courage of faith.

Viewed in the light of the martyr, Stephen is the greater of the two, and the image of the dying Jesus is swathed in dark shadows.

You can give your suffering and dying Savior no place in the light of the martyr except as you do violence to the character of His passion and death.

By what power has Stephen, and, after him, every other martyr triumphed? Is it not by the power which Jesus poured out into their soul? The martyr suffers and dies with Jesus back of him, with Jesus by the side of him, with the whole soul resting in Jesus' dying, knowing that Golgotha together with Gethsemane, now and forever, have broken the teeth of Satan.

The Cross of Golgotha alone explains the pyre

and the stake, for at the stake it is not the martyr, but Jesus, who *in* the martyr, triumphs.

The martyr does not stand before the wall, but goes in through the breach, which Jesus, He alone, and He for all, has beaten in through that wall.

They follow after Him, and see with the eye of faith, how He made all enemies tremble before Him and flee.

How then with the martyr compare your Savior Himself?

Him, Who stood alone in the face of the still unbroken power of curse and death; Him, for Whom, when He appeared, no stone of the wall had yet been dislodged, and Who alone, and forsaken of all, had to beat the breach therein.

Him, Who had no Savior back of Him, to cover Him with his shield, but Who was *Himself the Savior,* and Who with His own hand had to raise the shield, that was to cover *all.*

Him, Who far from being able, like every martyr, to look back to the Cross of Golgotha, Himself had to mount that Cross, in order to bear on it the sin of the world.

The whole thought, of seeing the martyr in Jesus, is as false as can ever be imagined.

Jesus *is* not the martyr, but He *makes* the martyr, and it is by His power won on Golgotha, that He makes the martyr *to triumph.*

And see here the contrast: The martyr separates himself *from humanity,* in order to turn himself toward God as an offering upon His altar, but Jesus faces curse and death in closest and most intimate union *with our human nature.*

The martyr, in the courage of faith, overcomes,

by breaking the tie with his human nature. His mother, his wife, his child, he cuts them all away from his heart. Jesus on the other hand can not be our Savior, except as He takes everything that *is human* down with Himself into the depth of curse and death.

The martyr dies for Jesus, but Jesus dies, to bear the sin of the world. He cannot, He may not leave behind Him at the entrance of Gethsemane anything that pertains to man. He must take it with Him. From Gethsemane He must carry it by way of Gabbatha, to Golgotha. He can not let our human nature, and, in adherence to that nature, our sin, slip away from Him for one moment, except as He ceases to be our Savior.

Jesus is bound, if we may reverently so express ourselves, to fallen humanity, and He must take the sinner, with whose life His own life is intertwined, along with Himself the whole distance of the long way of sorrows.

If in His passion and death Jesus had so lifted Himself up to God, as to have lost us, we would have been lost. And then only could He be our Redeemer, our Avenger, our Saviour, when through curse and death He kept His hold on us, carried us with Him and so bare our sin.

And this He did, *not* in thought, *not* in imagination, but in *reality.*

Here was not the *Word* as word, but the Word as it had *become flesh.*

The mystery lay not in His adoption of our image, nor of our world of thought, but in taking upon Himself *our human nature.*

By that human nature, which He took upon Himself, He embraced us in our sin.

And therefore both curse and death had to be suffered in that human nature, and in all the depth of that human nature.

The martyr cuts himself loose from his human nature, but both suffering, and dying, Jesus had to sink away *in that human nature.*

And so light dawns, especially upon Gethsemane.

You would have preferred, that at the entrance of the garden Jesus would have laid everything human aside, and would have shone forth in His heroic Majesty as Son of God. But what had to happen, was just the opposite. As He entered the garden He drew that human nature more closely than ever to Himself, and, if we may so express ourselves, He allowed His Deity, His Divine nature, His eternal Sonship to hide as far as possible behind that human nature. In the end it had to come to "a feeling Himself utterly forsaken of God," that thereby the union with our human nature, with our guilt and our sin might be made perfect.

And therefore He dies, not as the martyr, and not as the hero, who lifts himself above the human, but as *"the Lamb of God,* that taketh away the sin of the world".

As the *Lamb;* of the hero, of the martyr the very opposite.

Sunken away, and sinking away yet deeper than ever in our human nature, He engages in combat with the naked curse and undiminished death, and casts Himself into the arms of that utter destruction wherewith Satan assaults that human nature.

Like as Satan assaults the doomed in eternal death, so he assaulted Jesus, not as Son of God, but as Son of man. Stronger yet. The power of curse

and death, which otherwise Satan distributes among thousands of the lost, he drew down as in one bundle, centrally, upon Jesus, under which he endeavored to crush Him.

And against this Jesus neither could nor was permitted to fight otherwise than through the middle link of His *human nature*. That human nature could not for one moment be lost. That human nature must remain in between. The human must come out in its own full self-revelation. And this is it: "Father, that this cup might pass!"

And therefore an angel must come and strengthen Him.

Like as the finest human feeling would feel it, so must Jesus feel it. All that of anxious fear and terror can arise in human nature, must go through His heart. Nothing of the human could, or may, be spared Him. No drop of the cup of human suffering may be left untasted by Him.

And during this soul-consuming combat no one was permitted to be near. Even His three most intimate disciples He must leave at a distance. That wine-press He must tread alone. In three dreadful wave-beats that deathly agony must go over His heart.

But after each wave-beat there was a sacred pause.

And in that pause the human feeling in Jesus thirsted for human sympathy. He went back to His three faithful friends. They would be a strength to Him.

And when in so awful a moment, when the conflict between heaven and earth, between God and Satan, for all ages was going on to the finish, He had to learn, that even His three most faithful friends

perceived nothing of all this, felt no concern whatsoever about this, that they had not even remained awake, but had lost themselves in sleep, confess, do you not feel something of what this must have been to your Savior?

And then, do you not understand, better now, perhaps, than at first reading, that pathetic sadness of soul, which expresses itself in the brief saying: *Could even you not watch with me one hour?*

IX.

OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL

IN ISAIAH'S striking prophecy of the "Man of sorrows" in ten successive verses the *church of God* speaks first of the suffering that would come upon the Messiah for her sake: "He was wounded for our transgressions," and, "He has carried our sorrows" (53:5).

But after that follows in two verses, something quite different. Not what the church of her Redeemer, but what God Himself says of the Mediator: "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."

And between these two parts, of what the church *confesses* and what God *promises,* this difference is at once apparent, that the church steadily inclines to view the suffering of the *body,* while God points His church to what Jesus suffered *in the soul.*

With the church it is said in her confession: "When we saw Him, there was no beauty that we should have desired Him, and as a lamb was He brought to the slaughter."

But the Lord testifies: "Because of the travail of His soul He shall see it, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my servant justify many."

For the church of all ages, and also for us, this is a Divine admonition, in every study of the suffering of Jesus to be on guard against this onesidedness of our human inclination, in the outward suffering of Jesus to see *all* His suffering; and ever through what is before our eyes to penetrate to the suffering which He suffered *in the soul.*

This is not easy.

Painting and picture, plain song and touching description of what was *seen* on Golgotha, has for centuries interested the eye and ear of him who through love and faith clung to the Man of sorrows; to the Cross, that one saw as before one's eyes; and to what upon the Cross, under the pouring out of the most holy blood, was suffered outwardly.

If ever, then here feeling must speak, and with by far the most, feeling presently becomes sentiment, to enthrall us in what imagination views.

This appeals to the multitudes. This arrests the attention of the child. The woman is silent before it. He who is still weaned of faith, here inclines to admiration. It even evokes pity from the heart that is grieved by so much cruelty.

Also in preaching there is much of a touching nature to be outlined and to be depicted, because what is before one's eyes finds ready interpretation in the heart-gripping, soul and senses captivating word.

And so the Cross is menaced to be externalized; in the Man of sorrows to see the martyr in the foreground.

And yet this impulse should be tempered, this sensual trait must be resisted.

Listen to what the Lord declares.

In the end it depends not on what is before one's eyes, but on what is deepest, on what no eye has spied.

The deepest suffering was: *the travail of his soul.*

It takes effort of soul to enter into that *travail of the soul* of Jesus.

Mystery here piles upon mystery!

What was, what is Jesus' soul?

You face a riddle every time you think of your own soul. Where is it? Very surely *in* you; but dissect yourself and you do not find it. It is in hiding, and shows you but its workings. You also feel your soul in you. But itself remains a mystery. Once you shall go out from this earthly tabernacle, but how and where then your soul shall be and exist, you can not guess. And you understand still less, how afterward it shall be reunited with your body.

And though you may look away from these later uncertainties, even in the present your soul remains a riddle. What is your self in distinction from your soul? Your self is something different from your soul, for you speak of your soul as: *my* soul, and you are he who possesses soul and *body*. Thus the one is not identified with the other. Your *ego* is distinguished from your *soul*. But how, and in how far, and by what? Altogether new riddles, new questions, ever coming up again from the impenetrable mystery of your own wonderful being.

And now with Jesus.

His also was a human soul. From this nothing may be detracted. But with Jesus that soul is still far more than with us distinguished from His inner *ego*. One would almost say, to Him the soul was a natural garment, wherewith the Divine *ego* clothed itself.

He was and remained God, and yet His *ego* speaks to us from the vestibule of a soul like our soul.

A still deeper sense and a still more impenetrable mystery!

And in the soul Jesus has suffered, toiled, labored.

Also indeed in the body, for He suffered after His full humanity. But deeper, more anxiously still in His soul. In His soul was the real tension. In his soul the deadly conflict was battled through to the end. In the soul was the causal travail, of which the suffering after the body gave one but to behold the radiating after-affect.

I thirst, was hard, but you feel, with that other: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" this plaintive cry for a drop of moisture, to cool His tongue, was not to be compared.

Jesus suffered before the eye, so that every one saw it, for crucifixion was a dreadful death, and sensitiveness to pain in Jesus must have been unprecedentedly tender.

And yet, deadly pain has been suffered by other children of men, by more than one martyr, even under far more cruel torture.

But what no one suffered as Jesus, was the deep cutting, the deadly wounding sorrow of His soul.

By that travail of soul Golgotha is altogether unique. Never equalled by any other suffering. Susceptible to no comparison with our bitterest agony.

And because of that suffering of soul came the all-excelling glory.

Because of the travail of His soul shall He see it and be satisfied, shall He and He alone justify the many, and I shall give Him a portion among the great, that He may portion out the mighty as a spoil.

And all this, because His soul has battled through the awful travail.

With the martyr this is altogether different. His soul still jubilates and triumphs, even when the

scorching flames beat up against his body, and the smoke chokes him. Physically his suffering is great, but his soul has joy. How many on the scaffold have sung a Psalm of praise.

And therefore back of their stake there was no Gethsemane. Gethsemane Jesus alone has known. And in Gethsemane He complained not of the menacing sufferings of the body; but of His soul, of the woe that brake His heart. *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* (Matt. 26:38).

And in that agony of soul, He looked for sympathy to His disciples. "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" In agony of soul the blood pressed through the pores. And in that travail, that deadly travail of soul, God has supported Him with His holy angel.

Thus there lies back of it something far more terrible.

For, when the man who faces a martyr-death, purely by grace overcomes all fear of death, yea, when the hero on the field of battle, sometimes with exclamations of courage and heroism, runs into the jaws of death, how could Jesus, coward-like, have fallen short, in daring to die the shameful death, when He already saw the crown that was appointed Him, and knew that the arms of the Father were open to receive Him.

No, the *travail of His soul* was something wholly different.

Not as God did He suffer. After His Divine nature He was not open to the approaches of suffering. But being God, He suffered in the human soul; even as you, though you may be free in your soul from the poison of sin, and guiltless, may yet become

contaminated in your body with the poison of sickness which springs from carnal sin.

In His soul there was not just a surge of love; for love is no suffering. Nor yet alone an impulse of obedience to the Father, for obedience brings gladness. And not alone the heroism of faith, for hero-courage brings jubilation.

No, in His soul Jesus had to do with your sin. Not, that He merely *thought* of your sin, and had *intention* to die for it, but that in His soul He *bare your sin.*

A mystery, it is granted, but which for this reason you may neither cipher away nor externalize.

Jesus bore our sin, and to *bear* sin is the feeling, the undergoing, the suffering of the wrath of God that goes out against it. As the Catechism reads: "*The wrath of God against the sin of our whole human race.*"

Not as a sum in addition, the sin of a+b+c. But, because He was our second Adam, our second Covenant-head, the concentrated sin of our whole race was laid on Him. *The* sin as terrible germ of *all* sin. The poison at its strongest. Sin in its hellish nature. Of all sin the inner demoniac epitome. And going in against this the absolute wrath of God's holy Majesty inworked upon His soul with death-breathing, eternal-death-breathing curse.

This was His terror of soul, this His deadly oppression of soul, this the toiling of His almost succumbing soul, in which at length He felt, not that as God He tore loose from God—that is eternally impossible—but that His soul broke loose from God, and that God let go His soul, and before all devils and angels He had to utter the bitter cry:

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me! Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani!"

And this went on into death.

Not a death as the dying of God's child, as through the portal to eternal life.

But a sinking away in the depth of the eternal death, in which every creature would have been swallowed up forever, and from which He alone could come up, because the Father held Him with His almightiness, and He, Himself God, was too strong for death, so that death could not hold Him.

And therefore His soul could not be refreshed before His task was finished; before in the eternal death He was released again from the sin of the world which He bore.

And then His soul was free.

And then He saw of the travail of His soul, what glory had been obtained, what spoil was won, what brightness without end radiated toward Him.

Suffering of the body was there, too. And that, too, was nameless. But yet in that suffering, through the pouring out of His blood, the *travail of His soul* alone could impart the saving merit.

What Jesus suffered *in the soul* went the deepest.

X.

AND LAID HANDS ON JESUS

STRIKING and touching is the saying, in one of the formulas of the church: "He was bound, that we might be loosed."

He was the Redeemer from of old.

Anointed a few hours before by a woman at Bethany; but from eternity anointed of the Father.

Abel's *comforter,* when he died in the blood shed by Cain. Enoch's *inspirer,* when without dying he went to God. Noah's *security,* when he drifted on the waters of the flood. Abraham's *Avenger,* Isaac's surety, Jacob's wrestler, David's deliverer, Solomon's source of wisdom, driving all the prophets, in whom "the spirit of Christ testified and beforehand signified the sufferings that should come upon Jesus" (1 Pet. 1, 2). For all who feared God, the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world; not first after Golgotha, but from Paradise on to the hour, when the Child was laid in the Manger.

The Baptist, His herald and forerunner, and yet He alone the Reconciler of Zacharias and Elizabeth of whom John was born. The Baptist saying: "After me cometh He that is mightier than I", and yet Jesus presently Himself testifying: "Before Abraham was, I am, and he saw my day and was glad" (John 8:58).

And so *real* (be it as yet not *actual*) was that Mediatorial activity before the Word became flesh, that that Mediator Himself seven centuries before Bethlehem by the mouth of Isaiah, the son of Amos, testified: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good

tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn" (61:1, 2).

Take from this these mighty words: "To proclaim liberty to the *captives,* and the opening of prison to them that are *bound,*" and when on the Gospel page you read that the armed band entered into the garden where Jesus had agonized with tears, and that after a moment's hesitation, they *laid hands on Jesus* (Matt. 26:50), is it not what we confess in our formula: He, our Jesus, was *bound* that we who were bound, might be *unbound* by Him?

To have the body touched, touched against our will, touched with violence, hurts and is an insult to our human honor. Even the young vagabond in the street knows this, when defiantly he challenges the other street-arab, who wants to fight him, with the words: "Touch me, if you dare". And be it so, that among the rougher class of people a hand to hand fight is not greatly shunned, yet among them, this being touched is at once the sign to resist. He who feels himself touched, strikes back, defends himself. And among the more finely strung, in whom the sense of human honor is more keenly alive, the simple touch with the tip of the glove in the face, counts as a mortal offence.

Our soul pervades our whole body, and he who lays hand upon our body, touches our self, our person; and from the deepest ground of our reins our valiant feeling rises up to resist the offence that lies in such an undesired touch.

Our whole being rebels more strongly still against this offence, when a higher power lays unwarranted hold on us, when it is not a mere matter of touch, but when it aims to seize our person, to take possession of us, and by robbing us of our liberty to attack the freedom of our human life.

But above all else this feeling of another's hand upon us affects us, when he who does it is a public officer, and resistance is unlawful; when it is one in authority appointed of God, who takes us in arrest; and thus to the offensive touch, and the feared loss of liberty, as a third indignity adds the disgrace of impeachment, of accusation, of crime, which attacks the honor of our character.

Then not only does the blood flush the face because of the unwanted touch, and fear of imprisonment creeps upon us, but far more does the shame cut through the soul, of being openly led away through the streets as an evil-doer, as a criminal.

And all this crowded itself upon Jesus in that one moment, or if you will in this one saying of the Evangelist: "And they came and *laid hands on Jesus.*"

They laid hands *on Jesus.*

What is there not implied in these words?

Time and again they had wanted to arrest Jesus, and the people had wanted to stone Him. But every time it had been, as though an unseen power protected Him. He passed unharmed through the midst of them, and the disappointed officers came back, and told how they had not been able to arrest Him.

Now also the armed band had become alarmed. Hence the great force, that had been sent to arrest Jesus. It was "a great multitude with swords and

staves". There were no pistols and revolvers yet. Else they would have had them, well loaded, in the girdle. It was, says John, "a band of men and officers from the chief priests and pharisees". Certainly more than one hundred men.

Yet they would not have dared, had not Judas' treachery safeguarded them against the unexpected. Judas would first, as soon as they appeared, touch Jesus with the lips of falseness, and then they would lay hands on Jesus.

And even so they still trembled. When Peter, who did not understand Jesus, with the sword struck Malchus, one of the agents of the Sanhedrin, no one struck back. They did nothing. They stood confused and amazed. And only when Jesus said: "Take me in arrest", they dared.

A superstitious fright!

They laid hands on Jesus.

What do not these words imply?

Undoubtedly, Jesus stood there as man, but yet how different our attitude would have been. For what is the feeling of human honor in us, compared with what it must have been in Jesus? When you observe among us already such a difference of degree between the sense of honor of the day-laborer and the sense of honor of the richly cultured man, with what uncommon, to us unknown, power must that feeling, that sense of human honor have spoken in Jesus, whose human purity and superiority so far excel all our personal sense?

Deprivation of freedom, the sense of being no longer a free man, and to be subject to violence, and in arrest to be led away, is a dreadful sensation to us, the mere thought of which makes the blood run

cold. But think, how much more intense and striking this sensation must have been to Jesus, who, free-born as not one of us, must have felt the right to personal freedom vibrate through His whole being?

The shame of being arrested as an evildoer and openly to be led through the streets, so that your Government, which is the minister of God, by the violence it commits against you, publicly accuses you of wrong, can cut even you grievously through the soul. What must it have been to Jesus, thus to have been arrested and led away, to Him with Whom all shame was fraught with a bitterness such as we can only faintly guess.

O, it is true, He has also "despised this shame", and His more than angel-innocence dropped balm into this wound. He knew this, too, in advance, and in Gethsemane this too had already been fought out. But only now came the *reality* of it all, and in that reality lies the smart which deepens the impression of it to the utmost.

And do not take your stand between that band and Jesus, as though they alone were guilty, and you would have abhorred that arrest. These men who had to degrade themselves to do this work of shame, were no more sinful by nature than you. In those Roman soldiers the whole heathen world,—in those agents of the Sanhedrin all Israel—was represented. Represented the ordered power of Rome and Israel together; and thus in a literal sense it must be said, that the whole world here committed a crime on Jesus. Not because they were intent upon doing evil, but because, darkened by sin, they did not discover the Christ of God in Jesus, and were bent to

maintain their false world-order, over against the order of the Kindgom of heaven.

It was the sin of us all, by which they were systematically driven and pressed, and which, embodied in the ordered power, could not rest, until it had laid hands on Jesus, held Him in arrest, and was able to put Him to death.

Of course, as *believer* you abhor that band.

Now that your eye has been opened, and in Jesus you have discovered the Son of God, you appreciate the ruffianship of the hands that were laid on Jesus.

But this comes, because Jesus has first *unbound* you.

And that you might be unbound, Jesus must *let* Himself be bound. He himself must will, that hands be laid upon His holy person.

XI.

I ADJURE THEE BY THE LIVING GOD

NOT to be taken at one's word, is hard; and it betrays unwarranted severity, when, in daily intercourse with children or with servants, it is often said, as though it were the most natural thing in the world: "This is what you say, but it is not so." He who makes a habit of this, fosters untruthfulness in child and servant alike.

"To speak the truth", is of the ten commandments given on Sinai the only absolute and natural one, because it alone applies to the Eternal Being Himself; *the truth* being the expression of His very Being.

For God the first commandment is unthinkable. An image of Himself God has made. He can never take His holy name in vain. To the seventh day sabbath the creature is subject, but not God. The fifth commandment does not apply to the Eternal Being. Every day He kills the child of man. He robs by the violence of the elements. The seventh commandment of itself falls away. God covets everything that is ours. So there is acutally but one commandment (not as *commandment* of course, for who should command God), which in its essential nature applies to God, to wit, the ninth, the commandment regarding *truth.*

Therefore spake the Mediator, Himself being God: "I *am* the truth."

And therefore also Satan is called: *the father of lies.*

Truth and falsehood stand in God and Satan

directly over against one another, and it is our glory as men, that we have power to grasp the truth, but also the dreadfulness that it is possible for us to speak the untruth.

Yet even in fallen man, who is inwardly poisoned by falsehood, reverence for the beauty of truth is still so strongly alive, that to be called "liar", is in all higher classes of society the blackest stigma.

Even where one means this, by gentler manners he softens the expression, because the stigma of liar would cut too starply.

Thus appreciation of truth counts among us as a mark of nobility of soul.

Circles in which to be called "liar" does no longer offend honor, have fallen below the human gauge.

There is something of this wounding of one's honor also in *the oath.*

An oath is only in order, when danger of running aground upon falsehood, must be averted.

On the new earth, among the just men made perfect, even the possibility of the necessity of an oath will no more be thinkable. An oath can only be necessary among sinners, for sin's sake, in circles where the poison of sin has entered.

The oath is the means of resistance against the danger which from the spirit of untruth menaces truth, innocence, and good faith.

Hence the perfectly lawful and natural use of the oath in the courts of justice, which in the name of God dispense the right, because we, sinners, stand before God's eye in our untruthfulness. But hence also in circles of a higher tone of life, no oath is demanded from one another save in direst necessity; and no oath is offered.

This takes place among the dregs of society, where all truth is venal. It is the most untruthful man, who is most ready to take an oath; and it is among that low, rough class of men, that again and again all sorts of oaths are demanded of one another. Oaths, which frequently, alas, have no foundation in truth, but on the contrary, in falsehood and deceit.

Thus *perjury* is created, which is an almost satanic hardening against the truth.

Then the judge must stand in between, with human punishment to punish the criminal, who defiantly turned even the sacred oath into sin.

First you should have a clear perception in your mind of the nature of the truth, of the evil character of the lie, of the solemn significance of the oath, and of that satanic nature of perjury, if you would understand, what it must have been to Jesus, when in the presence of the whole Sanhedrin Caiaphas dared to defy Him with the words: "I adjure Thee by the Living God".

Jesus forced to an oath!

Not to an oath as witness in behalf of some one else, but to an oath concerning His own word and character.

"I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63).

As Son of God He had come into the world. As Son of God He had announced Himself. And now the Sanhedrin stood up against Him, as though they would say: "This is what You say, but you know, this is not so. You can not take an oath on it, nor would you dare to do so. Yet, if you dare, then, do

so. I, Caiaphas, the High Priest, demand it of you. I adjure you by the Living God. Of two things one. Either you will refuse to take an oath, and acknowledge thereby the falseness of your claim; or you will take it, and stand guilty before us all of perjury and blasphemy. This will disgrace you but the more deeply, as it can not prove your preposterous claim, that you are the Son of God.

Thus was he bent upon the exaction of an oath. Jesus must bend and break down before it, or dare the imputation of perjury.

Hence when Jesus had taken the oath, Caiaphas rent his clothes and exclaimed: *"He hath spoken blasphemy,"* and left his seat, that with all the members of the Sanhedrin he might attack Jesus, whom they now took for a perjuror, and make Him the target of their violence and scorn.

Do you now realize what grievous insult, and in it what keener suffering, this compulsion to take an oath, and the immediately following accusation of perjury, must have been to Jesus?

You also find it hard, when you are asked to take an oath; for every such demand shows, that without it you are deemed capable of speaking an untruth, and of choosing the lie in preference to the truth.

But this obligation rests upon you, because you are a sinner. You feel the offensiveness of it, but you yield, for your sin's sake.

But what a different sensation it must have roused in the soul of Jesus, to have an oath demanded of Him, in Whom there was no sin, and in Whom the Truth itself had become flesh.

To be ordered to take an oath not in a civil matter, not in the role of witness, but before the

spiritual tribunal of God's house, in the midst of His own priesthood reflecting priests, and this with respect to His own person and being, His mission from God as Redeemer and Savior of the world, His official existence as *Son of God.*

And yet Jesus undergoes also this humiliation willingly. He does not refuse. With that condescending love, wherewith the Eternal Being, meeting us in our human weakness, with an oath confirmed His word, in our behalf, so, before the Sanhedrin Jesus takes the oath.

Never intent upon His own interest, always seeking to promote yours, in taking the oath He declares: *Thou hast said.* Yea, that He might yet avert from the guilty head of Caiaphas the threatening possibility of the moment, to wit: the understanding of His oath as perjury, He tells him of His judgment to come. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

But nothing stops the satanic impulse of the stirring evil.

Caiaphas does not spare Jesus the very bitterest, and in the presence of the judges accuses Him of "perjury".

And also this most poisonous drop from the bitter cup Jesus must drink.

What has never overtaken you, was imposed upon your Savior in the court of justice.

Thou, Who callest Thyself Messiah, art a *perjuror* before the tribunal of the living God.

We, who are all conscious of having a part in the fellowship of untruthfulness, even though it were merely in its outward form, can not conceive how such slander, sparing nothing, must have wounded

the soul of Jesus, Him in Whom even the faintest suggestion of what was untrue, or opposed to truth, could never have arisen.

When an honest man, by stress of circumstance in business comes in contact with a band of deceivers who make nothing of a lie or even perjury, the very presence of such low company offends him. He feels, that he is not at home among such. Everything within him revolts against such lying and deceiving. And he thanks God, when he succeeds in extricating himself from so much human self-degradation.

He who has passed through this has suffered under it, and when he has made good his escape, he has called himself fortunate. And when, on occasion, one of these bold deceivers, dares to exact an oath from him who is honest, and even intimates the suspicion of perjury, the man of honor turns away with loathing from what is beneath contempt, and what brings the flush of anger to his face.

And this is but one who is fallible, and who presently upon his knees confesses himself a sinner before God.

What then must such humiliating treatment have been to Jesus!

To Him, Whose inner Self revolted from all falsehood, Whom every form of lying brought pain, such as we sinners only suffer in cases of extreme cruelty.

What must it have been to Jesus, to see Himself delivered to the lying-spirit of such a degraded tribunal of priests! He the Son of God, by them to be forced to take an oath, as though He were a common malefactor? And after He had taken that oath, amid

ribald noises, to be pointed at as a man guilty of *perjury.*

This also has been a part of "the travail of His soul", a measure of suffering which presently bare this excellent fruit, that more than ever yet it has made "lying" *hated* by His saints.

"When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44), was the sketch which Jesus drew of Satan's inner make-up; and for that terrible word Satan avenged himself, through Caiaphas, when in the end Jesus Himself, was called not merely a liar, but even "a liar under perjury".

Over against this vengeance of Satan Jesus now places His own.

The vengeance of His love, that He loosens the heart of His redeemed ones from lying, imparts to it the sense of truth, enriches it with the love of truth.

This flower of His suffering has bloomed these many ages; it still blooms; and he who walks humbly from love of his Savior, is conscious of its blossom budding in his soul.

For though it is true, that among "Christians", and in "Christian families" there is still much untruthfulness abroad, such "Christians" have been estranged from Jesus; such "Christians" lack the inspiration of the secret of salvation.

Untruthfulness in the Christian domain bears witness against those who have drifted away from Christ, not against Jesus.

For as in the centuries that lie behind us, the rule of the kingdom still holds good, *that hatred of a lie is the measure of love for Jesus.*

XII.

DENY ME THRICE

IN PETER'S DENIAL of his Savior, it is not the faithlessness that stands in the foreground, but the *suffering* that human disloyalty occasions the human heart; and very definitely the *suffering* which it occasioned our Savior.

Peter's denial is a chapter from the history of the passion of the Mediator. It is a link in the series of dreadful events, which from Gethsemane to Golgotha followed one the other with so great rapidity.

To be disregarded, not to be known, not to be acknowledged, is one of the most painful experiences we encounter. Not in the wrong sense, that you should imagine yourself to be all sorts of high things, that you should cherish I know not what high thoughts of yourself, and should demand all sorts of honorable distinctions, and be angry and bitter, because people refuse to burn the coveted incense before your altar. For this is no disregard on the part of others, but a lack of self-knowledge on your part. And it should be thought a blessing, when people do not flatter you, but soberly tell you the truth, and thus repress in you unhealthy self-esteem and foolish conceit.

But to be disregarded in your real seriousness, in your holiest intentions, in your most difficult battle of life, in the struggle of soul from which there is no escape when you rise at daybreak and when you retire at night, that indeed, is suffering, bitter suffering for the heart, which God has created with the thirst after human sympathy.

For though this sympathy is of a lower order, where it consists merely in the exhibition of good will, it can also be spiritual and of heavenly worth, when in the mighty conflict of spirits it nobly devotes itself to the task of binding heart to heart, and of doubling the strength in the battle of attaining our purpose in life.

Hence one may safely say, that for all God's prophets and apostles and martyrs the lack of this sympathy, this treading of the winepress alone, this deadly loneliness and oppressive forsakenness, has been their heaviest cross.

And when you think of the life, the self-perception, the inner consciousness of your Savior, which ripened before any one surmised anything of His battle of life, and Who in His public ministry struggled three long years without the companionship of any who understood Him, who sympathized with Him, and spiritually became one with Him, do you not understand that for Jesus there was a cross *before* His Cross?

As our Catechism puts it, "a suffering all the days of His life upon earth".

But this lack of sympathy appears in a much more sharply defined form, when you face spiritual antipathy in those who are of your class, and who seem to be your own.

Yet such was the case in Jesus' circle.

They deemed themselves to be one with Jesus, and they were not. Their whole fellowship with Jesus, during all those years, was one continuous misunderstanding. However clearly Jesus expressed Himself, spiritually they remained strangers to Him. They were men of a different spirit. And again and

again they tortured Jesus with their banal questions, as to when He would establish the Kingdom in David's city, and who then would be first minister.

For Jesus this was anguish of soul enough to kill Him.

And when Jesus put up barriers by saying: "My way leads to the Cross", the antipathy against His spiritual intention comes out most strongly in the man, who had warmest sympathy for Jesus' Person, and Jesus must avenge this antipathy and break it by His exclamation: "*Get thee behind me, Satan!*"

And even this does not help.

After the Holy Supper Peter still stands antipathetically over against the spirit of Jesus, and he brings out a sword, and wounds one of the servants in Gethsemane.

You can well understand, why every time again Jesus went *alone* into the mountain to pray; to pour out His soul before His Father, and to strengthen Himself in His heavenly Sender.

For do not forget, Jesus did not seek spiritual sympathy, mounting to warm lively faith, from men for the soothing of His own feeling, nor from the sense of strength too small. No, spiritual sympathy was indispensable to Him, if the world were to be saved.

When you rush into the water after a drowning person, nothing is more dreadful than that he refuses to be saved, that he swims away from you, and dives under, and wilfully seeks his doom.

And this in utmost measure was the experience of Jesus.

Satan tried, the multitudes tried their hardest to drag Him down to the depths, that He might go

under with them, but the world would not be saved. No heart unlocked itself, no soul made surrender to Him. Healed, fed, yes, that is what they would be in every hamlet and village. But with Jesus they will not risk their all. They will not pass over from death unto life.

This bitter experience has burdened Jesus all the days of His life.

This sympathy of spirit should have, but did not, come. And when finally all leave Him, He has to ask His disciples: "Will ye also go away?" And Peter indeed answers gloriously, so that Jesus is comforted of heart. But even then Peter did not understand his Savior. Not by far.

He thought he did, but this was not so.

It was a spark of light for one moment ignited of God in his soul, but presently it was extinguished again.

Jesus has been tried by His disciples most of all.

And among these most grievously by him, who could so truthfully say: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John 21:17).

For though among the multitude antipathy was far stronger, and among the people lack of respect more humiliating, Jesus did not take this too seriously. It could not pain Him grievously. It filled Him with plaintive regret, so that He wept over Jerusalem. But with respect to this at least He still could weep. And sorrow about which you still can weep, is already half reconciled.

Dumb sorrow is the most dreadful for the heart.

And *this* bitter grief, Jesus suffered most poignantly, when He was alone with His disciples.

With His beloved followers, who had forsaken

everything for Him, whose intentions were so noble, who would go through fire for Him.

But what did all that *love* avail Him. In the awful conflict with Satan He sought *faith,* He sought fellowship of spirit, higher unity, concerted action. And ..... how often they sided with Satan against Himself.

When the multitudes inflicted wounds in Jesus' heart, He always had His disciples whose sympathy could refresh Him. But when in this inner circle there was continual misunderstanding, when they always cherished other purposes in life, and were never able to enter into His glorious plans, or into the counsels of God, that human heart of Jesus was closed up to itself, and in the midst of His own He felt Himself cruelly forsaken.

Gethsemane is not something new, but in its shade all the beams of what Jesus had suffered before concentrate.

And now His heart almost breaks, and He implores His three closest disciples, at least not to leave Him alone.

For of course, if Jesus suffered grievously among the multitudes, He suffered still more grievously among the twelve, and worst of all among the three elect from among them.

That in Gethsemane even these three did not understand anything of it, was the bitterest drop for Jesus, in which He already tasted in advance the bitter drop of Peter's denial.

And yet the wound which by his intentional *denial* Peter inflicted on Jesus' heart, was a new bitterness by itself.

To be slighted, not to be understood, to have to

fight hardest him who loves you most, is indeed dreadful, but it becomes still more so, when it turns into *denial,* that is to say, when one inflicts this upon you not unconsciously, not when you are alone with him but openly before the eye and ear of people. Stronger still when this is done in the presence of your *enemies.*

Then the weapon cuts so deep; the wound inflicted smarts so sorely.

For then people notice it, and it becomes a public matter. Then your enemy observes it, and mocks you on account of it.

See how his own friends deal with him!

Then only it becomes *denial.* Abandonment, as far as they are concerned, of your holy intention to the scorn of your enemy; a shielding of oneself, implying that one has nothing in common with your spiritual aim; a severance of fellowship of spirit with your spirit; and thus an actual taking sides with your enemy against you.

To be denied, when you fight and struggle for what is highest and best; to be denied by the man on whom of all men you builded your fondest hope, confess, is there a more grievous pain thinkable for the human heart of the wrestler?

This can take place in ordinary, but also in extraordinary circumstances, and by this uncommonness it can become yet more dreadful, yet more intolerable.

One can deny you in your absence, so that only later on you may hear of it. But when you are denied to your face, when you have to listen to it, and every word puts fire into your soul, it becomes torture, and makes you feel as though there were no

more faithfulness or truth left among men.

When Jesus was denied by Peter, it was still worse.

Jesus not only stood by and heard it, but Jesus stood bound in the midst of His enemies, who were waiting to pour out His blood. With Jesus the end was close at hand.

At this critical moment the Wrestler looked for a mark of sympathy. One of His most faithful friends stood by, and He saw him turn away; think only of himself; hold himself aloof, and openly deny Him. Truly, the topmost point of suffering was almost reached, and for every other human heart it would have been too much to bear.

And Peter made it more dreadful still.

He denied Jesus not only once, but three times.

In the end he did this with cursing and swearing. God might damn him eternally, if he were a disciple of Jesus.

Almost inconceivable. It can not be told in words. But thus it took place.

Your Saviour suffered all this at the hand of Peter His disciple.

And upon the Gospel-page this is what the denial of Peter means.

XIII.

SMITINGS UPON THE FACE

IN HOSEA'S PROPHECIES (II, 4) it reads, how from sheer pity you take off the yoke that is on the jaws of an animal,—the Mediator given you of God, evil, rough human hands smote three times on the face.

First a sort of police-agent of the Sanhedrin did this, when Jesus dared to appeal to what for three years He had spoken publicly and done in the sight of all (John 18:22).

Afterward the Sanhedrin itself laid violent hands upon Jesus' holy face, after His confession under oath that He truly was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. For this was considered blasphemy! And then they arose from their seats of justice, and as though possessed of wrath, they spit Jesus in the face, and with fists smote Him first upon the breast, and then upon His face, crying out: "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" (Matt. 26:68)

And the third time Jesus was struck upon the face in the yard of the Roman courthouse. Thither the Roman soldiers had taken Jesus after His scourging, in a cowardly and contemptible manner, unworthy the imperial uniform, to mock Him with their sneers and taunts, saying unto Him: "Hail, thou imaginary King of the Jews!" and .... meanwhile they smote Him on the mouth (John 19: 3, Dutch version).

When you consider, that this was done three times, not for the sake of form, but from malicious

intent, you can imagine how bruised Jesus' face must have been, when on the way to Golgotha, bearing His Cross, He evoked such pity from the women who walked along, that they could not hold back their tears.

Of the physical pain, which this brutal treatment inflicted upon Jesus, we make no mention. He who has ever been struck in the face, knows how sensitive the facial nerves are, and how intensely the pain increases with new blows, as the blood quickly makes the veins of the face to swell. But yet the keen physical pain occasioned by a blow in the face is not the bitterest.

When suddenly ā difficult matter comes to us, which altogether upsets us and touches our inmost self, we are apt to exclaim: "It seemed as though I was struck in the face." And what these words express, is by no means first the pain, but much more the disgrace to our sense of honor as a human being and as man.

Your body also demands that it shall be respected, but above all else you claim the right, that your face shall be left alone, because in your face your soul expresses itself. More than any other part or member of your body, your face is the bearer of your personal honor.

He who strikes you in the face, gives you not merely pain, but profanes you and insults you.

And when they smote Jesus on the face, they wilfully and purposely insulted His honor as a Man.

And in this smiting of Jesus on the face there was yet more.

One of the evangelists, i. e. Mark (14:65), adds, that after they had outraged the holy face of Jesus

with their poisonous saliva, they first threw a cloth or bag over the noble head, so that He could not see what went on around Him, and that then they beat the covered head with fists, exclaiming: "Prophecy, who is he that smote thee?"

Thus it was the *fist-beat of the hand,* which here defied *the power of the word.*

Messiah was to be the highest prophet. Jesus had confessed Himself to be the Messiah. Well, then, He should also exhibit His Messianic art, and, with a cloth thrown across the face, without sight, be able to tell the name of him who smote Him.

Hence brute violence, in the service of scornful mockery, directly profaning not only His honor as man and human worth, but also assaulting Him in the fact that He was the Anointed, the Messiah of God.

Thus the *hand* of him who smote here stands over against the *mouth* of Him Who was smitten.

Twofold power is here in combat.

The power of the *word* with the power of *violence.*

Might is right, declares the ignoble spirit of the world; *right must be might,* is sounded in heavenly language from above.

This, and no other, is the antithesis between the realm of the mighty ones on earth, and the Kingdom of Heaven which the Messiah came to establish! and, therefore, this world-power fights with the sword, with military force, with police, and where it is still unordered, with fist-force and with a smiting on the jaw. And against that violence, against that despotic sway of brute force, which renders our human life more akin to wild animals than to heaven, Jesus now appears with no hosts save those of God's

angels, and with no sword save the sword of *the word.*

Would you have an exhibition of Jesus' power? Then listen to His *word.* He spake as One having authority.

When you ask for a symbol of world-power, you are shown the whetted sword and the clenched fist; but when you ask for a symbol of the power of Messiah, it is not the fist that clenches itself, but the *mouth,* which makes heavenly strength to go forth.

And when in the court room of the Sanhedrin, the priests of Jehovah smite Jesus with fists upon the blind-folded face, and defiantly exclaim: "Now prophecy, thou man of the word, imagined prophet of the Most High, prophecy, and say, who it is that smote thee," it is the ruffian hand of the power that on earth is called great, which aims in Jesus' face at the power, which is too strong for it, the power of the divinely animated word.

The mouth of Jesus had all those years been an offense to the high priests; those lips from which flowed the word of peace, had been a stone of offence to the men of the Sanhedrin.

Again and again they had wanted to arrest, stone and kill Him, but when it came to the point, their evil courage failed them; for when at such times Jesus stood in the midst of the multitudes, and spake so effectively, His face shone with a heavenly brightness, and something spake from His eye as never has spoken from human eye, and from His lips flowed a speech, which cut the conscience, which caused the finest strings of the human heart to vibrate, and turned all the people away from them. And when these same Pharisees in argument dared

to take it up *with the word* against Jesus' word, they every time suffered defeat. To oppose Jesus, to *contradict* Him face to face, they were not able. That irresistible face of Jesus, and the word that came from His mouth, was too much for them.

But their *hands* were equal to the task! If once with these they might take up matters against Jesus, the outcome would be different.

That with their rough hands they might once belabor that offending countenance, that defiant mouth to their heart's content!

And now, the opportunity was offered them in the Sanhedrin.

There Jesus stood defenceless.

The multitudes were not present. They now had Him all to themselves. No better chance ever, to pour out their bottled wrath on Jesus.

And yet, as though even now they could not bear nor resist the overwhelming impression of His face, they snatch a cloth from the table and throw it over His head.

And now, that the face is covered, now that that face can no longer speak to them, now that that face no longer troubles them, now they dare, and now they strike it to their heart's content.

So they smote Jesus on the face.

From the face the soul speaks; in the word the spirit goes out; shines out that which makes man *Man;* what is observable of our higher origin; and what exalts us as of God's generation, above the order of the *animal* world.

The animal can not speak, and therefore in *his* order there is no other right than the right of the strongest. The sparrow-hawk that claws the dove

and lacerates it; the pole-cat that springs upon the neck of the hare and sucks its blood; the tiger that casts the hart and kills it.

The world of animals knows no other order. Its power is in claw and maw and beak.

But over man God the Lord appointed an *higher* order.

A dominion not of physical violence, but of spiritual superiority, believing in His holy ordinances.

The less the hand takes part, and the more the eye bears rule and the word carries dominion, the higher the life, in home, in society, in state.

Hence the conflict between the realm of the world and the Kingdom of God in the end must focus itself on this one point: the violence of *the hand,* or the power of *the spirit.*

Peter did not understand this, when he struck with the sword, and thereby grieved Jesus so deeply. This is what Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world, otherwise my servants would have fought for me" (John 18:36).

But upon violence the Sanhedrin risked it, and Pilate risked it *well.*

Jesus' face they were not able to withstand, against His word they availed nothing, against His spirit they stood helpless, but they bound Him with cords, they beat Him with scourges, they laid their hands upon Him, they spat upon Him, they tormented Him, and finally they nailed Him to the tree.

Such was *their* power, in this lay their strength.

And it is this combat between the violence of the hand and the spiritual power of the eye, of the face

and of the word, which concentrated itself most bitterly and sharply in that dark hour, when Jesus stood defenceless in the midst of excited and embittered priests, and they made His face invisible, and smote Him with their fists.

So there lies in this particular part of Jesus' suffering a whole world of thoughts.

Your Jesus the lovely name for all that seeks dominion of right over might, of spirit over flesh, of eye and word over resistance of fist and brawn.

And therefore, the less you lean upon might, and the *more* you trust in the power of the spirit, the *more* you are like Jesus.

And also, where for the Lord's sake you suffer wrong at the hand of superior powers, and can not protest otherwise than with the *word*, there Jesus is the comforter of your soul, Who bore this selfsame suffering to the utmost degree, and Who one day shall turn it into glory.

XIV.

AFFLICTED

"STIFLED" is he who can get no air; pants for breath; feels everything work in and press upon him; feels himself giving out; and is conscious of anxious sweat forming drops upon his forehead, so that, unless relief comes, he shall suffocate.

But worse still than this being stifled in chest and throat, is the stifling of the *soul* of a man, when the mind is distressed, the heart perplexed, the soul harrowed; when everything is to him immured; and there is no way of escape; and "the fury of the oppressor" (Isa. 51:13) comes upon him, so that there are bands and prisons; and thousand deaths go through his heart, and all the billows of the Almighty go over him!

In a poor human heart at times it can be unspeakably stifling! Stifling with an oppression, over which we have no more power. That we lie cast down as in the nethermost pit; with lions around us on every side; without light before our eye; and without water to cool the tip of our tongue!

In youth one does not believe in this. Then one considers it hallucination and bigotry and therefore feels no inclination toward the Word of God, that would comfort all such as are thus oppressed, and addresses those who are thus perplexed of heart. Yea, you even find grey-haired men, and women advanced in years, who still make light of the complaint of "oppressions of soul".

Sometimes this stone-blindness goes so far, that even devout Christian people see nothing in these

perplexed conditions of a human heart, save gloomy exaggeration. Then it is said to be owing to a man's temperament. To melancholia of constitution. To too dark an outlook upon things.

And this jesting and smiling goes on, until once more a man appears, of a grave countenance, in whose eye one reads perplexity of soul, and who has courage to say to these superficial people: "Yes, I am a man who has seen trouble!"

And such persons appear again and again in the several circles of life.

No mention of it then appears in the public press, but it does take place; and God writes it in His book above; and the angels take notice of it; and the "Savior from perplexities" (Jer. 14:8) looks down upon it with all the compassion of His comforting countenance.

And whether the world will it or not, and superficial Christians believe it or not, the cry of those, who are thus perplexed, appeals to the heart, and works an unbelievable effect upon those who hear it. Mightier than any other instrument is this very anxiety "of him who lieth in the pit" to arouse the false confidence of sleeping souls!

Anxiety has something unspeakably touching in its effect upon us.

There are throes in this anxiety of soul as of a woman in travail. But for this very reason from this anxiety there is birth, there comes strength, such anxiety bears fruit.

To be troubled of soul is to be in labor for the Kingdom of heaven; to be in sorrow for the sake of a higher life; in one moment to die a thousand deaths, that from this death life might germinate; except—and this is the most awful—except this

anxiety is of hellish origin; and rises from your own wickedness, and drives you to despair, and so forces you into a yet more hopeless state before your God.

But apart from this, and merely considered as the anxiety, in which God the Lord ensnares our soul, to trouble us, till we must give up, then yes, there is in this "anxiety" an altogether Divine apprehension. For then that pressure of God's hand around your soul is even as when you squeeze a bag empty of air, that, when presently released, it may suck in air of itself till it can hold no more.

This altogether unbearable anxiety is nothing else than that God first drives out from your lungs the impure, unholy air which you had breathed in from beneath, that by the vacuum thus created within, suction might originate, to drink in the fresh air of God's blessed heaven.

For your soul is even as your lungs.

It is made to breathe in air, i. e. to breathe in, and drink in the life of God.

So long therefore as your soul is filled with poisonous vapors and air-particles which are not from God, the life of God can not enter in, and then in spite of this to bring it in, God must needs first empty you of self, and lay you low, that everything unholy may go out of you, and room be made in you, for that breath of the Lord, which belongs to the lungs of your soul.

Whether therefore this stifling comes to you by distressing circumstances in business affairs, in your home, by reason of your children, in your plans, in your deliberations, in your musings and meditations, or whether it creeps upon you from your blood to your soul and lodges in your body and attacks you in diseases and pains, or finally that they are im-

mediate spiritual anxieties, which consciously are concerned about God's justice and your own doomworthiness and impotence, or even, more distressingly still degenerate into temptations of the Evil one,—all this is but a difference of degree! Anxiety is anxiety, and all anxiety when it presses hard, is terrible, and if it be but wound by God round the soul of His child, it is in each of these degrees the means to slay you and to make your Savior alive in you.

And this keeps you standing.

A woman in travail would almost succumb, if she did not know "it is for the sake of my child!" and so likewise your travailing soul would perish, if she did not know, that it is for the sake of a breath of God for the soul.

But now that she knows this, knows that "for the soul in heaviness presently comes a garment of *praise*", that when the hour of darkness shall have overpassed, she shall come again into "a roomy place", and that the soul now in distress shall gloriously be *enlarged* (Ps. 4:1), now she jubilates with Habakuk (3:16): "I shall rest in the day of trouble," and with Jonah (2:7) in the belly of the monster, prays: "When my soul is overwhelmed within me, I will yet call upon the Lord!"

And when our gracious and compassionate God doeth yet more, and shows Himself to be so compassionate and pitying, that He never puts you into a pit, but that *He himself descends into it with you*, that He never imprisons you behind bars and bolts, but that in the imprisonment you find the arms of His eternal compassion *always still underneath you*, yea, so, that He, with holy calm, can say: "In all your afflictions *I, your God, have been afflicted*"

(Isa. 63:9), confess, my reader, could this infinite, gracious God do yet more for us; and is our murmuring in the affliction then not shamefully loveless?

These are again the passion weeks!

Do you then live at the Cross?

Also in what, deeper yet than that Cross, has been suffered in Jesus' deeply tortured soul?

When He was oppressed and trod the winepress alone and no one was with Him?

When He became troubled even unto death.

When the blood of anxiety as drops of sweat fell down from His forehead!

That you might thank your Savior for it, by a steadier confidence when anxiety overtakes you, and by being less afraid in the close presence of your Lord.

This is most delightful to the mother, when she sees: "My child is less afraid *when he but sees me near!*"

And would Jesus be less to you than the mother to her child? . . . . . .

And, therefore, when trouble overtakes you, do not forget Jesus, and think of Him, when you see one of your brethren in distress.

Affliction is a dreadful thing, and to comfort the soul of others in their distress is so blessed, so almost divine, and altogether a fruit in your own soul of the suffering of your Lord!

XV.

INTO THE HALL OF JUDGMENT

OUR Savior allowed Himself to be led into the "Hall of judgment".

What is this?

Is the "hall of judgment" not His Father's house? Is not all judgment from God? Is it not God Who maintains justice? When a people advance so far in civilization, that a "Hall of judgment" is opened, is it not a blessing bestowed upon that people?

See it, in days of insurrection and mutiny; when violence dominates and blind passion has free play; for then the "Hall of judgment" is closed and the judge does not occupy his bench. Then fire from hell breaks out to the surface. Think of Paris in 1870. Then all devils are let loose.

And no sooner has insurrection been checked, and the power of mutiny broken and brutal violence been foiled, than the hall of judgment opens its doors again, the judge resumes his seat upon the bench of honor and the scales of justice balance again in his hand.

And when there is light and life in the Hall of judgment, the better citizens freely draw breath again and malefactors tremble.

The "Hall of judgment" in the midst of the world is therefore very really a Divine something. An holy institution to which cleaves something of the honor and omnipresence of God. There are "gods" who sit in the Hall of judgment and God is in the midst of them, says the Scripture.

With God everything is settled according to "Justice".

The interest at stake, is not merely to cleanse and sanctify us, and to render us blessed. It is not merely to treat us *medically* and to heal us. Neither to fashion us *ethically* and to fill us with a new and holier life. No, with God and thus likewise with the creature, that enters into dealings with the living God, it is before everything else the question of justice.

Of the *right.*

For God the Lord is a God Who is conscious of Himself, Who knows what He wills, and thus has expressed His will and His life in ordinances and commandments and institutions, and has drawn lines throughout all creation and appointed each a limit and measure, and has ordered for all creatures a way wherein they should serve Him and exist for His sake.

Were God the Lord an unconscious divine Being, without will and therefore without commandment, it would suffice us, to receive new *life* from Him and to be healed of our wounds.

But since everything in God is *conscious will* and hence everything operates after His ordinances, there is a *right,* i. e. a law, which determines what is due to God from His creature, and now that *right* must operate as surely and as certainly, as a star moves in its divinely appointed course.

Hence that right also before God is inalienable. He extends the dominion of that right even so far, that He reverences it with respect to Satan, to the fallen angels, and in behalf of those who will to be lost.

God, because He is God, may not, and will not

overcome simply by His greater power, but will conquer only by the right and according to the right.

In this lies also the only sufficing key for the explanation of Jesus' suffering.

In that world into which Jesus enters, there is a right. A falsified, a distorted right, be it so. But always still a right, that has an house of its own, has its own barristers, and in which the deeply sunken world preserves a maintenance of its honor.

And now Jesus surely will and shall make that world a prey, and win for Himself those that have been given Him of the Father, but after the earthly rule, this also must be done according to *the right*.

Now God the Lord had so directed it, that there was some understanding of right extant among all nations, but that there was only one nation among *which* right (law) had obtained a noble and more pure development. And that people were not the Jews, but the *Romans*.

Thus a condemnation according to Jewish law would have availed nothing.

In Israel there was a God-given right, and from this an institution of justice had been derived.

That Divine right was holy, and according to that right the Man of sorrows was Israel's King and Lord.

But according to the derived institution of human justice Jesus could be cast out by the Jews, but could not be sentenced to death by their law.

And therefore God had so ordered it, that the heroes of law, i. e. the Romans, were present at the time in Jerusalem; in Jerusalem had authority in hand; and maintained the exclusive title, to administer capital punishment.

Thus in Jerusalem there was not merely "a" hall

of judgment, but the *best* hall of judgment conceivable on earth. A hall of judgment wth a Roman as a judge.

Therefore reads an article of our Christian faith, that He: *"Suffered under Pontius Pilate!"*

For that Roman in that hall of judgment was Pilate.

That "suffered under Pontius Pilate" is the Church's confession of faith in the leadings of God.

And into that "Hall of judgment" the bearer of our sin enters, though He knows that there the sentence of death awaits Him.

Death or life; Jesus wills "right".

"Right" in that house where the man sits who has authority, because that authority has been given him of God.

Jesus loves the Father eternally and because God is right and lives by right and doeth according to right and aims at right, Jesus can not stay away from the right, even though that right shall consume Him in death.

And this He did, that He might lead you into the house of eternal right, i. e. the house of His Father.

This He did, that He might establish a house of judgment in the mansion of your own heart, and that there he might place the discerner of thoughts again upon the seat of honor.

Yea, this He did, that in His church on earth also He might institute a place of refuge for the right of His God.

Tell me, reader, has your heart, your home, your church, become such a "hall of judgment"?

Do you also, with that deep penetrating elasticity, for God's sake, though it operates against yourself, love the right?

XVI.

SENT HIM TO HEROD

PONTIUS PILATE, the procurator of the Emperor of Rome, tried to rid himself of the trial of Jesus. He knew what the Sanhedrin had brought in against Him, to wit: that Jesus had presented Himself as *king*. He understood, that, in case it should be proved, this would mean high treason, and would not be punishable otherwise than with death. But he did not interpret the appearance of Jesus with sufficient seriousness. Of resistance on the part of Jesus, of insurrection, of a conspiracy against the Emperor, there was no evidence. He saw in Jesus a fanatical zealot for the ancient national traditions. A subject of harmless fanaticism.

In no particular did Jesus impress him as a troublesome seeker after power. Pilate therefore dreaded to sentence Him. And yet .... he must needs be careful. In the Empire at that time a dangerous system of espionage, fawning and sycophancy was abroad. As a matter of fact, Jesus had asserted that He was the King of the Jews. At least so it was said before the tribunal of the Sanhedrin. And when he himself had asked Jesus: *"Art thou a King?"* Jesus had in a most positive manner answered *"Yes!"*; even adding: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37). But ... report of it might reach Rome ... and if the Emperor were to learn that in a matter of high treason he had spared the guilty one .... who knows, might this not cost him his high position, perchance his life?

Therefore an opportunity of escape was welcome, and he found it in Herod.

Herod Antipas was at the time Tetrarch in Galilee and of the Trans-Jordanic. He was a son of the Infant-murderer of Bethlehem, who occurs in the Christmas narrative. After his death this Herod Antipas had been appointed Regent in Galilee, and under his rule and in his domain first John the Baptist and afterward Jesus appeared. He built himself a new capital in Tiberias, on the Lake of Genesareth, and there introduced all the wealth and dissipation of a semi-heathen city. His wife Herodias was his evil genius.

Thus Jesus really belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod. And as Herod at that moment was in Jerusalem as a guest of Rome's procurator, it occurred to him, whether he might not rid himself of this inconvenient trial, by sending Jesus to Herod as his proper judge. He then would know what he might do.

So it happened.

"As soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time" (Luke 23:7).

Herod was a descendant of Esau, and in Jesus the seed of Jacob stood before him.

Isaac already had prophecied to Esau, that a time would come, when he would bear rule over Jacob. "By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother. Afterward it shall come to pass *that thou shall rule over him*" (Gen. 27: 40).

This prophecy was now fulfilled. The heroic race of the Maccabees, and of the Hasmoneans, had been dethroned by the Parthians, and the Romans

had clothed Herod the great with the purple in the place of the ancient dynasty. That Herod, who still reigned when Jesus was born, was an Idumean; and Idumaer is the Latin name for an Edomite, and Edom was Esau.

Half true and half false was the mark of this race. Esau too was from Isaac, and therefore from Abraham, but the Edomites were the rejected side-branch.

And as was the case with their descent, so it was with respect to their faith. They were said to serve Jehovah, but they did this in their own way, and were heathen at heart.

The mother of our Herod was Malthake, a beauty from Samaria. One knows his wife Herodias from what she did to John Baptist, and from what she demanded of her daughter.

But yet, Herod's conscience remained tender. Like all half-faith, Herod too was *afraid,* and was haunted by self-reproach. The whole movement, which in Galilee and in the Trans-Jordanic was connected with the name of Jesus, annoyed him, and left him no rest. The dreadful thought that Jesus might be John Baptist, who had risen from the dead, tormented him. Once he had tried to kill Jesus by assassins (Luke 13:31). And always he had tried to get a look at Jesus, that he might convince himself whether He were John or not. Possibly he had spoken to Pilate about this, when he had received him in courtly audience.

And now the chance was fair.

See, Pilate sends that Jesus as a prisoner to him.

And now he does not think of the trial, he forgets that he sits as judge. All he cares for is to sound Jesus, and see a sign worked by Him.

And when he sees that Jesus is an *other* person than John, and that Jesus does not let Himself be sounded, and does no sign, the anxiety of his conscience turns into wantonness.

With his officers and with the soldiers of the watch he makes game of Jesus; with ribald jests he ridicules Him; as a mockery of His pretended Kingship puts a purple robe about Him, and so sends Him back to Pilate. According to vs. 15 of Luke 17, with the message that he had found no fault in Him. On the contrary to him it seemed a case of jest, rather than one that called for serious consideration.

Thus on this dreadful day of His suffering, only a few, brief hours before His cruel death, Jesus was made the butt of pusillanimous play.

He who tries to understand something of the condition of Jesus' soul during these tense hours of public mockery, feels, how it must have been a grief to Him.

He knew, He realized that that very afternoon, it would be death to Him. The character and behavior of Pilate was a transparent secret to Him. He felt more deeply still, that on that day, such as in tragic dreadfulness no day ever comes again, the lot of the whole world was to be decided. All the centuries of the past terminated in that single moment, and all the centuries which in the history of mankind were still to come, were to be dominated by the death upon the Cross of that terrible day. All the suffering of the world, from earliest days until latest, piteously focused itself in Jesus' heart.

And when at such a pivotal moment only a legal decision, given solemnly as the seriousness of the case demanded, could harmoniously have minis-

tered comfort to His heart, He had first been subjected to the wild fanaticism of the Sanhedrin; then He had been vexed by the irresoluteness of Pilate; and now He had been sent to be made sport of by Herod, the frivolous scoffer.

It was arrow after arrow shot into His sensitive heart. Injury upon injury. And always the high priests present, scornfully to rejoice when He was shamed and mocked, and with Jewish fanaticism vehemently to accuse Him.

And underneath all this stirred ever yet the old hatred of Edom against Israel, of Esau against Jacob, of the degenerate race against the people of the Lord.

New bitterness in the bitter cup, which He must drink to the dregs.

And also this bitter draught, submissive and meek, Jesus has drunk. "Father, not my will, *thy* will be done."

And yet, how little does the church of Jesus enter into that radically-changing suffering of her Savior.

She has heard of it, she knows well that Jesus was also sent to Herod. But what else is this to her, except an episode scarcely worth the notice in the sorrowful drama.

Living the life, and the suffering of Jesus over again with Jesus, from the agony of soul in Gethsemane to the *Eli Sabachthani* upon Golgotha, has become foreign to her. The Cross is enough for her. With the sorrows and the afflictions of the several steps that led to the Cross, she has no fellow-feeling.

Does not love for Christ compel us, in thought and in the tension of sympathy, to drink after Him drop by drop that full cup of His suffering?

He who makes the Cross the only point of contact, stands at the cross so poor. There is but one emotion in his heart. The overwhelming emotion of the dying of the Son of God. But he loses the rich, the all-sided, continuously changing experience of step by step living over again, feeling with, and suffering with, Christ, all the bitter decease which He has accomplished at Jerusalem.

For him who does not appreciate this it would have been enough, if in the Gospels it had simply been recorded, that Jesus was arrested, sentenced and put to death.

But God did not so plan the passion-Gospel for you. On the Gospel-page He depicts the whole course of what took place; every particular of what Jesus had to battle through; you see drop by drop leak into the passion-cup; and how draught by draught that cup has been drained by Jesus.

Does it not behoove us then, with the life and the love of our soul to trace the steps of the conflict that was struggled through in Jesus' soul?

Then only do you *feel* what Jesus did for you; at what price you have been redeemed.

So your love for Jesus obtains form, content, and multitudinousness of distinction.

So only with your love for Jesus in the suffering of the Son of man, are you truly rich.

XVII.

NOT THIS MAN, BUT BARABBAS

A BANDIT, a highwayman, a murderer from lust of murder Barabbas was not. He had been caught in an uproar, and in the confusion of that uproar he had stabbed some one.

You well understand, that people rather see a common murderer behind bars, than as freeman with his dagger in the girdle in the street. Had Barabbas been nothing but a blood-thirsty bravo, the cry of the people: "Release unto us Barabbas" (Luke 23:18) would have been unnatural; and you can not psychologically explain it.

But the matter assumes an altogether different aspect, if Barabbas was a sort of patriotic hero of the people.

As is self-evident, especially on the part of the lower classes in Jerusalem, the relation with the Roman occupation was strained. Elsewhere in Canaan also people took offence at the Roman uniform, but yet in Caesarea or Joppe this uniform grieved the Jew by no means as much, as within the holy walls of Jerusalem.

No uncircumcised had ever been permitted to come within the holy precinct. Now they were not only there, but they were there with authority, and ruthlessly they took out the heart of all Israel's national expectations.

Jewish leaders saw the impossibility of casting off the Roman yoke. What could their defenceless band undertake against the sharply-drilled and strongly-weaponed legions? Help from outside

could equally little be counted on. Rome had subjected everything to itself. There was no free Egypt, no Syria, even no Assyria any more.

Hence the head was bowed, and for the offended national feeling, diversion was sought in Pharisaic overspirituality.

But no such wise prudence prevailed in the back streets of Jerusalem. There, in suppressed anger, from inflated and brutal national pride they continued to rail at Rome and everything Roman; and this occasioned frequent riots, uproars on small scale, collisions between the common people and the garrison. At one of these lesser insurrections Barabbas had been the great man, the rough customer, who had fought with more impudence than any other, and who now in the eye of the populace sat incarcerated, as a martyr for the sacred Jewish cause.

So you understand, it needed but a word, to make the mob that stood before Gabbatha, as with one voice to call for the release of Barabbas.

The Galileans had sung the Hosanna for Jesus, but the Jerusalem mob called boisterously for Barabbas.

Without doubt, therefore, while Jesus died on Golgotha, the excitable mob provided the liberated Barabbas a jubilant entry into the neighborhood where he dwelt.

While Jesus breathed His last, Barabbas with the wanton people revelled at the banquet that had been hastily prepared.

What was the suffering of Jesus in this?

Did Jesus attach to this choice of the rabble so much significance, that the preference of this coarse

mob for Barabbas grieved Him? To see a brutal man like Barabbas chosen above Himself, could this occasion Jesus pain? Did He not stand superior, to be affected by the scorn, which this choice implied?

Did not Jesus, Who knew what is in man, understand the noisy mob that stood before the house of judgment, and did He not know, that all the sympathy of that turbulent mass of people was bound to be with Barabbas, the moment the tone-giving priests encouraged them but a little.

True, to us as to the Evangelists, it is dreadful, that such a man, whose hand was stained with blood, was preferred above Jesus Who would shed His blood for us. More still, in that choice by human beings of the murderer above the Savior there is to our human sense something deeply disgraceful, something that bears witness against us, and casts us down from our imagined height, since it demonstrates so lamentably clearly, how little hold the noble and the pure, even in an appearance like that of Jesus, has upon the human heart.

But what puts us to shame and what disgraces us, is not the real *suffering* of the Man of Sorrows.

No, that suffering lay elsewhere.

It lay in Pilate's classing together of *these* two from among *all* his prisoners.

For Pilate knew well what he did. He chose these two on purpose. Of course he had heard of the royal manner in which Jesus with the Hosanna to the Son of David had been conducted into Jerusalem. In Jesus he saw another popular hero of the people. A man like Theudas, a man like Barabbas. One of these fiery patriots, who stirred up the national feeling of the Jew against Rome's Emperor. And

just because Jesus to him was a man *like Barabbas,* therefore he gave the people the choice between the two. Barabbas the people's hero from the back streets, and Jesus the imagined king of the Jews, the people's hero from the despised Galilee.

It is the proud Roman, who, strong because of the spears of his soldiers, laughs at that impotent Jewish crowd, and would exhibit his superior power by releasing one of their two popular favorites. And would not the people readily prefer Jesus? He indeed was called *king.* And how much more attractive was Jesus' noble appearance compared with the rude personality of Barabbas.

It was not a whim, to put the Lord Jesus on *one* line with Barabbas. It was not the endeavor to place a man whom Jerusalem feared by the side of Jesus, thus surely to direct the choice upon Jesus.

No, Pilate saw in Jesus a kind of Barabbas and in Barabbas a kind of Jesus.

Jesus and Barabbas both were men, who had stirred up the national pride of the Jews against the Roman Emperor, and had plotted against the invincible power of the Roman eagle.

And when you fix your eye on this, you will realize, what constituted the suffering of Jesus in this scene between Himself and Barabbas.

Had it not been His endeavor all the days of His life upon earth, to exorcise that false spectre which haunted His people? Had not at every step of His way, this false expectation of Israel barred His way and frustrated the coming of His Kingdom?

All prophecy had foretold His spiritual Kingdom, but Israel had become dull and obtuse. They had eyes, but saw not. Seeing they did not observe.

They had falsified everything. They had put the false image of their earthly, narrow Jewish expectation before the spiritual image of prophecy.

Therefore they did not recognize the Messiah in Jesus; for in nothing was He like what they imagined.

And therefore every time again they had invoked that false spectre of their own carnal expectation against Jesus. Had He been willing to be the incarnation of that false spectre, they would have knelt at His feet.

This was intended when we read, that they wanted to make Jesus king; and Jesus had to evade that false spectre and flee into solitude. And when He refuses to be the incarnation of that false spectre, they take up stones to stone Him.

With that false spectre of a Jewish national hero who would oppose Rome, Jesus was pursued even in His own circle. How greatly Peter annoyed Jesus with that false spectre, so that He had to rebuke him, saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Salome also vexed our Lord with it. In Gethsemane it was still the same.

It was all the work of the Tempter, who already in the wilderness had held up this false spectre as a tempting figure before Jesus' eye. For thee all this earthly glory, if thou wilt kneel down and worship me.

The whole effort of Jesus ministry had been to redeem Israel from that demon. To make His people see how they deceived themselves. To open the eye of His followers to prophecy, and thereby to His true *spiritual* figure as king, and so to make the majesty to shine forth of the grace of God, Who had

given His dear Son to *the world,* not to liberate a Jewish people, but to save that world forever.

And yet, all this would have been of comparatively little moment, if at least in the hour of His bitterest suffering when He must accomplish His decease, this evil, false spectre had no longer vexed Him.

But, alas, this even could not be.

When in Gethsemane Peter draws the sword, it is again the selfsame effort to force this false spectre upon Jesus, and to compel Jesus, not to be Himself, not to be the Savior of the world, but the incarnation of that evil demon, and the false messiah.

When He stands before Caiaphas, they curse Him and spit Him in the face, because under oath He had repelled that false spectre by the revelation of His spiritual Messiahship.

And when finally He came before Pilate He must face again the selfsame bitter ordeal, and with His spiritual kingship shake off the kingship of that false spectre that was forced upon Him.

Would this be the end?

Would He, now that He must die, at least be permitted to die as *the true Messiah?*

Or would they persecute Him, even till His death, even upon the Cross, with that false spectre?

Thus the question stood; and now comes Pilate with his Barabbas, and in this Barabbas there appears at length that false spectre incarnate as it were standing by the side of Jesus.

Yea, such an one, like this Barabbas, the people wanted Jesus to be, and with this incarnation of the false messiah Pilate places Jesus on *one* line.

See, said he to the people, I have two men under arrest. Both are the incarnation of your national pride. Jesus and Barabbas; whom do you choose?

So is Jesus pursued till His very death by that false, that demoniac spectre of the carnal messiah. No right is done to Him. They force upon Him what He is not, what He can not be, and will not be. And for what He is, no one has eye or ear.

He who would have redeemed Israel from that false spectre as from their curse, must suffer it, must endure it—as though He Himself had willed to be that false spectre—to be persecuted with His own caricature unto the death.

And when He hangs on the Cross, the superscription over His head still proclaims that false spectre to be Him.

And now, in that Barabbas, the incarnation of that false spectre, in such a revolting form, stands by the side of Him.

And Pilate says: Jesus or Barabbas, they are both the same.

More dreadful still, the people answer: If both are the same, then rather a Barabbas.

For us Barabbas, with Jesus to the Cross.

XVIII

BEHOLD, THE MAN

SUPPOSE, Jesus had come into the world and had undergone His violent death when the Syrians, the Egyptians or the Parthians were still masters of Jerusalem, the court of justice or the judge would have consented to Jesus' death without a suggestion of opposition. What among such people cared a judge for a man's life?

Then that Parthian or that Syrian or that Egyptian would have committed a crime against Jesus, but the *world* as such would not have been guilty of the judicial murder of God's Firstborn. It would have remained a private piece of shame on the part of this Satrap or of that lawless people, and would not have concerned us as *a race*.

The Church of Christ has felt this, and therefore in her creed she has confessed: "suffered under Pontius Pilate." Not as a superfluity. Not as a reminder of an incident, which is neither here nor there. No, the Church has made this a part of her *confession*, as though she would say: The Emperor of Rome was lord of the whole world; in the whole world there was no nobler development of jurisprudence than that which went out from Rome; and in the name of the Emperor of the whole world, by him who sat as judge in this highest developed form of jurisprudence, Jesus has been delivered to the cruel death of the Cross. For thus the whole world stands guilty of His cruel death, and it was the highest form of justice, found among men, which outraged itself, when it passed sentence of death upon Jesus. Hence

it is indeed the world *as world,* humanity *as such,* that appointed Jesus unto death, and no one of us can wash his hands in innocency, but we all have to accuse ourselves, and to confess our mortal sin before God.

This is the reason, why the Evangelists give so brief an account of the trial before the Sanhedrin, and one so circumstantial of that before Pontius Pilate.

Not what the Sanhedrin in wild fanaticism asserted, but what Pontius Pilate in calmly pronounced sentence would decide, is what here counted.

And Pilate shrank from it.

He felt that it was unjust. He did not want to do it. At first he did not dare. He exhausted himself in subterfuges, by which to stop the mouth of the Sanhedrin. Intentionally, knowingly, to deliver to the executioner, one, whose guilt was fabricated, whose innocence was clear as sunlight, was to a Roman judge cruel, pusillanimous and dishonorable.

That in this combat Pilate finally succumbed, was our succumbency; it was the violation of right perpetrated against Him, Who died to regain our right with God.

Only one way of escape might still be open: *human feeling* might raise a voice against this violation of right.

On the square of Gabbatha the great multitude was gathered. In the hearts of those people was a twofold trait. On one hand cruelty, that revels in the sight of pain. But also on the other hand humanity, that feels the urge of pity at the sight of the chosen victim.

Upon that first trait banked the high priests and

their accomplices, and with wild gesticulations they kindled in the heart of the vast crowd fanatical cruelty, calling out and crying: To the cross with this miscreant, Away with Him, Away with Him. Crucify Him!

But Pilate trusted in that other trait, the human feeling, the trait of commiseration with, and compassion for a victim. And there was promise in this of much, when he, the stern Roman and severe judge, took measures to waken that human feeling.

From the court-room he came outside again, and standing on the steps of the house of judgment, he briefly addressed the masses as follows: "See, I bring Jesus out to you once more, that ye might know that I find no fault in Him."

And then by his officers he ordered Jesus to be brought out from the court-room to the front steps, robed not in the garb of the hated rabbi, but in that of a mock king. With a purple mantle about His shoulders, a crown of thorns upon His head, and with a reed, as though it were a sceptre, in His hand.

And when all the people, in the first moment of surprise, in silence looked upon Jesus, Pilate, in true Roman fashion, embraced the opportunity, very briefly, as a Roman speaks, to say to the multitude: "*Behold, the man*" (John 19: 5).

He counted upon the tragic contrast. The mock-robe, and the reposeful, holy face of the Christ; the restful-tender and yet so touching appearance of Jesus' entire person.

As though he would say: For one moment forget this wild noise, and the clamor of your leaders for His blood. Consider what you do. See Who here stands before you.

Behold, *the man*. Think no more of the Rabbi;

no more of the hard accusations. Have an eye to *the man;* to your victim. And if there is any human feeling in your heart, confess, is this a man to put to death without just cause.

Pilate might perchance have reached a stronger effect, if he had left off that mock-robe; but he evidently counted on the power, which mockery sometimes exercises, of breaking the tension of seriousness.

The report had gone out from the Sanhedrin that Jesus was *a false Messiah,* and that had excited the minds of the people against Jesus. This in all seriousness had made the people angry with Him. Against this the resounding cry had been raised.

Might not ridicule of so foolish a pretension unnerve this frenzy of the people?

What danger can there be, that this mock-king should present Himself as the real Messiah? What is this but the imagination of fools? What could Rome, what could the Jews fear from this impotent, this almost silly man?

Of danger there is no semblance or appearance. Of effort to lay claim to sovereignty there is not the faintest notion.

Here is no pretention, and though He might have called Himself a King, so foolish an assertion betrayed but its own emptiness.

Behold Him, look at Him. Is He one to lay snares for your national peace? Is this Jesus a man to turn your State upside down?

Behold, *the man.* What is He but a man like other men. Perchance one given to mental aberration and conceit. But as He stands there, is He not rather a helpless than a disturbing figure?

For once think not of what has been told about Him, but see Him Himself.

He, Who here stands before you, is after all *a man;* is there in your human heart no pity for this *man?*

Pilate's endeavor did *not* succeed.

What he achieved, was merely, that *human feeling* hardened itself against Jesus, and this added new and bitter woe to His suffering. For nothing affects one so bitterly as to perceive that in hot, blind passion, even ordinary human feeling is denied him.

No one can now say, that the authorities alone incurred guilt with regard to Jesus, for that the people at least pleaded for the innocent One, and human feeling asserted itself in compassion for Jesus. No, with public authority, legal verdict, and people's plebiscite, and human feeling, in brief, with *all* the energies of our human heart and our human life, we have arrayed ourselves against Jesus, and the wild passion, mad with fury against Jesus, is by nothing abated.

That, *Behold, the man,* spoken by Pilate, and greeted by the people wth new outcries for His blood, consummated the guilt of the world wherewith it has sinned against the Holy One.

There is more.

As in the saying of Caiaphas: *"It is expedient that one man should die for the people"* (John 11:50), there lay a deep, prophetic truth, which he himself did not perceive, so Pilate in this: Behold, *the man,* gave expression to a mystery, of which he himself had no idea.

What the world lacks, what in all its spiritual conflicts the world seeks, is *the man.* Not man

sunken away from himself, such as every one finds him in his own heart; not fallen man whom we meet in one another every day. But *the man,* who can reconcile us again to the fact of our being *man* ourselves. The man about whom to enthuse. The man, as our ideal. The man who lifts us up from our humiliation, and who restores us again to what in ourselves as man we lack.

And the answer to this burning inquiry the Church of Christ has understood to be the Ecce, homo. *Behold the man.*

The only true man, the Christ has become to her.

And in this mystery to the eye of her soul the mock-robe changes into glorious reality.

The *man,* Who, because He alone was truly man, is not a mock-prince, but Lord and King of us all.

XIX.

CRUCIFY HIM, CRUCIFY HIM!

ON HIS WAY to Golgotha, in the midst of His mortal woe, even *respect for His anguish,* which is every sufferer's due, was cruelly denied our Savior.

From of old it was customary, as only truly fulfilled in Jesus, to put the words of Jeremiah in his Lamentations (1:12) upon the lips of the Man of sorrows: *"All, ye, that pass by, behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."*

That is the prayer for respect for grief, which from the tortured soul of the sufferer goes out to men.

He who suffers is naturally prone to ask others for something in their heart of an after-thrill of his suffering. Especially in suffering the need of human sympathy makes itself felt. A sharing on the part of others of one's grief, which does not need to be real love, but just a response of human feeling, and which therefore we expect from every one that is human, even though he is an entire stranger to us.

Just as it reads in Lamentations, a stranger, one who pursues his journey, *one who passes by,* must be struck at the sight of such suffering, it must move him, and by so being moved at the sight of our distress, even an utter stranger can sustain, refresh and comfort the sufferer.

Only a few drops of this human comforting were mingled in the cup of Jesus' suffering.

On the way to Golgotha women from Jerusalem walked along, who, seeing Jesus' exhaustion under

the weight of the Cross, were softened and wept.

They were probably young women from the lower strata of society, who knew nothing of Jesus, but were made tender at the sight of the striking contrast between Jesus' noble appearance and the scornful treatment He endured.

But these women, whose heart was softened for the moment, were the exception. Everywhere else, in the street, before the house of judgment, in the court room of the Sanhedrin, among every group of people who knew of Jesus, there was no evidence of sympathy with His suffering, no trace of respect for His anguish. But rather fiendish delight that was wickedly on the watch for the chance to take part in the fray, not merely to scourge Him, so that blood trickled down His back, but to wound Him with insult, and so to cut Him as to make His human heart to bleed.

This satanic wounding of Jesus' heart reached its highest point, when He hung upon the tree, when the devilish goading began: "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will worship thee!"

The pain of such a demoniac word was greater anguish in His heart than the nails that pierced His hands and His feet.

Scorn and insult mingled to grieve Him, to hurt Him in the marrow of His soul, to wound Him in the deepest parts of His hidden being.

That doeth *the word.* That is the power of *the tongue.*

A Divine, glorious instrument given to us of God; for the word, the tongue is the instrument with

which we praise God, utter love, and comfort the brethren.

But as spoiling of the best always occasions the most terrible corruption, *optimi corruptio pessima,* so likewise it is here.

That same tongue, that same word, profaned, desecrated, stolen from God, and placed at the service of Satan, exceeds, in power to wound, the most poisonous arrow-point and the sharpest lancet.

With the dagger you can wound a man's body, but with the dagger of the word you can wound him in the soul.

Therefore human cruelty exceeds animal blood-thirstiness. For the animal also hisses and roars when it leaps upon its prey, but merely to frighten it, and not devilishly to harrow it. Further than thirst after blood it does not go with the animal; it is man alone who hankers after the marrow in the soul of another.

And that evil hankering spake in the cry: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!"

For this they cried, not away from, but in the presence of Jesus; *so* that He must hear it; the while they saw Him standing there, and with their evil eye awaited the effect of their murderous cry upon their victim.

When Jewish people lose their self-control, they become passionately excited and inflamed.

When Jews become excited, the sounds from their deep throats are grating; almost raucous.

That raucous sound goes still more piercingly through the ear of him who must hear it, and when it becomes a cry for blood it degenerates into screams of madness.

And this evil passion whips up a yet more violent

wave-beat when such a cry goes up, not from a small group, but from an innumerable multitude that crowds a whole market-place.

Then such a cry becomes tempestuous, violent, overwhelming.

Rising up from one corner of the square, it is at once repeated in echo to all corners and undulating back is repeated over and over again. One storm of human voices, from the heart of a thousand excited ruffians, bent upon blood, spending itself upon that One, Who stands there helpless, and hears it all, and with His sensitive heart trembles before it.

Crucify Him, crucify Him!

So the priests cried out, and the people cried and yelled after them, until Pilate himself became alarmed at the outbreak of such passion.

And although he spoke against it, there was no help. Again the storm broke loose, and again the air was rent with the yet more angry cry.

Always: Crucify Him, crucify Him!

Until Pilate, at all other times the undaunted Roman, became afraid, and even with his soldiers did not dare to take his stand against this howling storm of passion.

Only when at length Pilate submitted, obeyed, and delivered Jesus to be crucified, did that dreadful cry, which made Jesus' soul shudder, cease.

Such is the rabble, such is the nature of the mob.

Suddenly it will burst into flames of enthusiasm, of unbounded wonderment, of what borders almost upon worship. How often had they wanted to make Jesus king, and how readily they joined in with the *Hosanna* when upon the white ass Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

But equally suddenly their *evil* passions will burst into flame. And then nothing can stop them. Then the sense of their superior power makes them arrogant, tyrannical, inexorable. When once they call for blood, blood must flow, and the evil lust of accomplishing the bloody deed poisons their cry.

For that stormy cry: *Crucify Him, crucify Him!* that was crucifying Jesus already in advance, before He had yet come to Golgotha. It was to make Him battle through beforehand all the anxiety and terror which such an outburst of wild passion casts into the soul.

Jesus was not of stone, but a man with a human heart, and in that human heart was finest sensitiveness.

Mention is sometimes made of pachyderm persons, who as though in a coat of mail stand invulnerable in the midst of the howling of an angry mob.

But such Jesus was not.

In Him emotion operated more tenderly, more delicately and more sensitively, than is possible in us.

And what at the sound of that cry: Crucify Him, crucify Him! Jesus has battled through and endured, we have never surmised.

When at last Pilate delivered Him and the tempest of passion came to a calm, that sentence of doom afforded Jesus a *respite*.

For consider, such an hour of wickedness can scarcely be fought to the finish by one who is solely bent upon his own bodily safety, and who meanwhile in bitterness of soul hates and curses the mob, which as an escaped wild animal defies him.

Then passion works in against passion, his own

anger overpowers the anger of the mob, until at length the balance restores itself, for though the mob may continue to yell, as hero the individual conquers.

But so it was not here.

Also in that hour of furor, when Jerusalem called in the curse upon itself, the impulse of love did not desert Jesus for one moment.

That people who called for His blood, was *His* people, the people of God, after the covenants.

It was the people of His kindred, from which He had taken His flesh and blood. The people of His brethren. The people, for whom, before all other peoples, He had prepared salvation.

It was the people of Zion, over which the Lord had anointed His King.

And therefore, when that murderous cry of crucify Him, crucify Him! sounded and resounded across the market-square, that wild cry sounded in the ears, and in the soul of Jesus, not as a murderous cry from strangers, of a wild mob, which did not concern Him, but it was to Jesus what it would be to you, if your own children, your own brethren, the men of your own kindred, were to clamor for your blood.

This made that *Crucify Him, crucify Him!* still more dreadful, still more painful to the bleeding wound of Jesus' heart.

No, the suffering of Jesus was not merely that they struck Him with fists in the face, and with a scourge lashed His back, and with nails pierced His hands and His feet, and made Him die on the accursed tree.

The suffering of Jesus went on and on.

It was one unbroken suffering from moment to moment.

And therefore he who loves Jesus with a discerning love, also knows what it is in that uninterrupted suffering to suffer with Jesus.

He trembles every time he catches that *Crucify Him, crucify Him!* as echo in his ear, even in his soul, and can not resist the impulse, as often as he lives that terrible hour of the past over again, with an ever fresh offering of love to make his approach to his Savior.

The fruit not of his own goodness, but of what Jesus suffered for him.

XX.

A CROWN OF THORNS

THE "CROWN OF THORNS" of the Christ is in the whole world of our representations the emblem of the deepest contrast between scorn and honor, outrage and glory.

In the idea of the crown, honor and glory. In the cruel, wounding thorn, scorn and mockery.

Yet let no one misjudge also in this, the soldiers who had to perform the service of executioners.

With us the word "crown" suggests at once the idea of a beautiful covering for the head, shining with gold and sparklng with precious stones. But in the world of the times to which these soldiers belonged, such was not the case. To the Greek and Roman, crown and wreath were almost of like significance.

Among the Greeks every person of authority when functioning wore a crown, which consisted of braided twigs and leaves. He also who spoke in public meeting covered his head with such a wreath. And the wreath of laurels, handed out as a prize to the winner of the race, still lives in the wreaths, with which, less among us, but of frequent occurrence in France, the winner of the prize is crowned.

Among the Romans likewise the crown originally was nothing but twistings of tree-twigs, in keeping with the Roman character, and mainly used as a military emblem of honor. With the triumphal entry into Rome by a victorious general and his troops, both he and his brave warriors wore a wreath or crown of braided laurel branches. With the ovation

the myrtle twig took the place of the laurel branch, and the brave general who had saved a city, even received a wreath or crown, woven together of grass spears. Only the emperors of Rome had the right to wear such a laurel wreath or crown continually, and then the natural laurel branch was changed into a laurel branch of gold. And from these golden laurel wreaths every later form of the European crown has been developed.

In itself, therefore, there was nothing strange, that the soldiers, who had Jesus in charge, wove together by way of a crown a handful of stems, and put it on Jesus' head. They did not invent it, for that was a Roman military custom. Thus they *always* wreathed and crowned their victorious generals. The contrast here lay merely in the thorn-branch in place of laurel twigs, and their scorn in honoring a helpless man, who had announced himself as a king, as though he were a mock-image of Rome's emperor.

The emperor of Rome bare rule at Jerusalem, and they had heard that Jesus had been sentenced, because He had put Himself forward as a rival king.

The mere thought, that this defenceless, helpless man had undertaken to set himself up against the mighty emperor of Rome, roused their love of ridicule. This seemed to them the highest point of folly and of frenzy. And it was this ridicule, aroused in them by the sentence itself, to which they gave expression, when they put the mantle of a Roman soldier about the shoulders of this defenceless fool, gave Him a sceptre of reed in the hand, and as though he were Caesar himself, placed a triumphal wreath, but one made of thorns, upon his temples.

Only when after this they struck Him on the head, was cruelty added to ridicule.

Could these same soldiers now rise from their grave, and see the outcome of the drama, which was played in Gabbatha and on Golgotha, in the course of history, how surprised and astonished they would be.

The empire of their supreme emperor for more than a thousand years tracklessly gone from the earth, and that sentenced Rabbi of Nazareth worshiped throughout the world as One greater than Dives Augustus, as King of kings, as the Savior of the world sent from God, as Lord of all and God of all.

In this the combat expresses itself between the two powers, which dominate all human life: the power of violence and the power of the *spirit.*

That antithesis springs from our duality, which shows itself in our *body* and in our *soul.* These two belong together. In pure harmony they should cooperate, the soul governing, the body serving. But both turned away from each other. The strength of the body, the hand that grasps, the foot that tramples down, took a stand of its own, and opposed the power of the soul. Cruel external violence arose. The seeming right of the strongest, i. e. of the strongest physically; and hand in hand with this, the oppression, the humiliation, the trampling underfoot, the usurpation of that inward power, which works up from the soul.

But that power of the soul, that power of the spirit did not yield. It maintained the combat. Not with the weapon of violence, but with the weapon of endurance, of silent suffering, of protesting sub-

mission. And where the power of the soul was defeated and trampled underfoot, the dying eye looked into the eye of the inhuman monster with an expression which inwardly wounded him and spiritually overcame him.

This combat between the spiritual power of the soul and the supremacy of the strong hand, goes yet deeper than the antithesis between soul and body. It goes down to the relation in which God stands to His creature, and the life of heaven to the life of this earth.

God is Spirit and by the power of the spirit He created this whole earth, and when you look up to the heavenly choirs about God's throne, it is all one host of spirits, equipped with nothing but spiritual powers, who are the bearers of His Almightiness.

For this reason also everything here below, that springs up in man from God, utters itself spiritually, and only the lifting up of spirit makes our life flow into one with the life of *heaven.*

And against this power the violence of the stronger upon earth arrays itself. So does the highwayman as he overpowers the traveller, murders and robs him. The thief who breaks into your house and steals. The rich self-sufficient one who oppresses the poor. The usurper who with a host of soldiers invades a country. The strong man who subordinates his tender wife to his will. The big boy who embitters the life of the smaller one. The superior power of the majority that makes the minority dance to its fiddling. The mighty man of the people, who makes that people work for him, and grinds them down. The injustice that dares to violate the

right of the weak. The violence of arms that smothers the voice of the conscience.

All this has come upon man because of sin. Rooted in God the power of the spirit stands invincible. Torn away from God the spirit must yield before the violence of the strong hand.

And therefore there is but one way that can lead the spirit within us back to victory again. The faith that makes the spirit join itself again to God, and, trusting in Him, endures and suffers.

The crown of the laurel twig is fallen away from the spirit, and only by willingly wearing the crown of thorns, is the outlook upon the crown of finest gold renewed to us.

This is the tragedy of every one who belongs to the spiritual nobility of mankind, written in blood and tears upon every page of human history.

This is still the stirring tragedy in the life of present times.

But it is alone in Christ, the Divinely Anointed King, that this awful tragedy focusses itself as in its central point and finds its heavenly unravelling.

These soldiers of the head-watch at Jerusalem, are no figurants, but rather the undisguised representatives of impetuous violence, as at that time found expression in the uniform of the Roman soldier.

These soldiers, the Roman legion, the Roman eagle, that Roman army vanquishing everything before it, the armed body-guards of the Roman emperor, were exponents of the greatest power of violence then known in the earth, that trod and trampled underfoot and struck down everything in its way, and with irresistable pride subjected the world to itself.

And before these soldiers Jesus stands as the highest thinkable revelation of the power of the spirit. There was nothing nobler, purer, holier than He. And Jesus stands before them with nothing but that Spirit. No body-guard surrounds Him. No disciple comes to His aid. No weapon rests in His girdle. When it comes to violence He is utterly defenceless. Great, above everything great and glorious is He through nothing save the Spirit.

In this exalted power of the spirit Christ is King, the Anointed of God, over all the quick and the dead. In the power of that Kingly spirit speaks a prophecy of glory before which all glory of earthly tyrants, even that of Rome's emperor, pales.

But the Roman soldier does not observe this, sees nothing of it, has no eye for it. The only power he knows is the violence of the sword. And those altogether insignificant mannekins, who at that hour constituted the chief watch, had a feeling that they were everything; Jesus nothing; and therefore they made game of Him and encircled His head with twigs of thorn.

Yet, while they made game of Jesus, they made not Him, but themselves objects of ridicule.

Even that crown of thorns to Jesus has become an emblem of honor.

When the choice lies between violence of the strong arm, and the hidden power of that crown of thorns, every nobler character still prefers that thorny crown; though it has never been our privilege to wear that crown of thorns with as pure a nobility of soul as Jesus.

What we ask as highest honor, is not that we

might wear that crown of thorns *like* Jesus, but *under* Jesus in fellowship of soul with Him.

And pressed by Jesus upon the head, that crown of thorns is to us the emblem of courage to endure, of power of soul to suffer, of inward assurance that the *spirit* shall prevail, and that violence shall no longer *enoble* but *dishonor*.

How highly is the triumph of the spirit already now exalted above the violence of the strong arm throughout the world.

What disgrace and shame because of violence, that still dares to trample right under foot. And on the other hand how nobly tuned is that song of praise from the human heart for what the soul that suffered, the spirit that knew to endure, the hidden man in us who persisted and put things through, at length was able to achieve against that violence.

Yet bitterly at times the struggle still goes on.

Noble souls still weep; spiritual superiors are still worsted, so that even God's angels mourn for those that suffer wrong; and a chill goes through the heart at the sound of the shrill laughter, that greets the triumph of what is coarse and mean.

So we are still unable to dispense with the inspiration of Jesus' crown of thorns.

That crown of thorns remains to us the symbol of our confidence. It must inspire us still, comfort us and keep us standing.

In Jesus' crown of thorns glitters to the eye of faith the diadem of the high victory that awaits us.

XXI.

AS A LAMB LED TO THE SLAUGHTER

THAT YOUR SAVIOR not merely went into death, but that He was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Is. 53:7), is to the saints of all ages the most potent charm of His holy passion.

Many a prophet went into death, having prophecied Christ's coming, even as afterward the blood of the apostles was shed. Outside of the sacred domain the multitude is great of those who have paid the price of death for the sake of their conviction.

In Jesus' suffering therefore, the dying itself is not the chief attraction. Dying for the sake of His cause was common to Him with many. And he, who with tender love for his Savior in his heart, has watched the bloody spectacle of Golgotha, at the final gasp, when the Savior's head sank upon the breast, was aware of a feeling of relief, that now the end of the torture had come, rather than that he was overcome by the horror of the dying itself.

The saintly soul therefore has only seldom centered his attention upon that moment of the actual dying, but has far more sought to lose himself in meditation upon the divine *greatness of soul,* which in all His suffering shone forth with such enchanting beauty.

And then it was always again the figure of the *Lamb of God,* that presented itself to the eye of the soul.

That calmness and resignedness, that submissiveness and passiveness, that restfulness and that bend-

ing of Self before God, which enthralls you at every turn of the way of His passion.

Not as though the devout mind, lost in contemplation of Jesus' suffering, itself chose this image of the holy Lamb of God.

On the contrary, that touchingly beautiful image had already been depicted by the Holy Ghost in the ceremonies of Moses' law and in the prophecies of Isaiah. John the Baptist had taken it up, when he said to his disciples: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!"; and, when Jesus has ascended into heaven in glory, His holy apostles point us again and again to that "undefilable and irreprehensible Lamb" through whose blood we have redemption. Yea, when at length the exalted and glorified Savior Himself granted His apostle on Patmos a look into heaven, He shows all principalities and powers in worship before His glory giving praise to *the Lamb that was slain.*

Why *the Lamb* was given the honor of being the image of *the Man of sorrows,* is a question, which in this connection would lead us too far afield. Only let no one forget, that in His eternal counsel, before He created the lamb in the animal world, God the Lord had already determined the dying of the holy Lamb of God; so that not Jesus is named after the lamb, but rather with an eye to the suffering and dying Messiah was the lamb given its character and nature.

Yet this will not detain us here; of greater benefit than such a speculation, is the deeper insight into what this "going to the slaughter as a lamb" implied.

And what then lies in this "going to the slaughter as a lamb" more strongly expressed, than the will-

ingness to surrender Himself, with which your Savior subjects Himself to His suffering?

"Father! not as I will, thy will be done!"

And in keeping with this there is no effort, however weak, to withdraw Himself from His suffering; no cry that it might be mitigated; no suggestion of resistance; but rather a holding back of His disciples who wanted to offer opposition. Neither was there straining of nerve to pose as a hero, far less as a martyr. Divine simplicity and of itselfness, is the character that marks all Jesus' suffering. It comes upon Him as though it did not come upon Him. He adapts Himself to it, as though suffering were the element of His strength. You observe no insensibility, for in Gethsemane He prays that it might pass from Him and on the Cross He calls for moistening of His dying lips. But neither do you observe any excess of tender sensitiveness, for He endures bitterest and direst suffering with calm submissiveness. It is to Him as a stream that must be forded, as a thunderstorm that must break loose upon Him. He becomes amazed, but He is not frightened. And in the most terrible agony before His death-struggle He still has a word of tender compassion for His mother, who weeps at His cross.

You see in your Savior, that suffering truly is *against* His nature, but also, that this suffering in this sinful world has become *natural* to the Son of God.

Of Him *could* not "all men speak well".

He *must* stand as a sign that should be spoken against.

The world *could* not tolerate Him, *could* not bear Him, and *must* try to cast Him out.

And to Him that anger, that bloodthirstiness of

the world was not strange. He should needs have been of that world, not to arouse it.

Since He had not gone out from that world, but from God, He *must* be brought to the slaughter, and because He was God's own dear Son, He could not go to the slaughter otherwise than as God's holy lamb.

His own also the Lord therefore constantly addresses as the sheep of His flock.

In them He sees the image of the lamb. Sometimes even they are called "the lambs which He shall gently lead". For whether there is mention of sheep of His flock or of lambs which He gently leads, the fundamental idea is the same, and by both nomenclatures your calling in life is shown in Him, Who went before you as a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

His holy apostles point you to it. You then, as they exhort, must bear with divine patience the suffering that comes upon you for Jesus' sake, "looking unto Him, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). "Look then unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God in the heavens!" (Heb. 12:2).

"They have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. They have hated Me, they will also hate you" (John 15: 20). "But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33).

And when presently His apostles would put the real stamp upon Christian character, they remember

the word of Jesus, in which He declared the meek blessed, and are inexhaustible, therefore, in their encomiums of the beauty of calm endurance and of the holy ornament of a forbearance and a suffering, for which awaits you above the crown of glory.

If you seek fellowship of soul with the Lamb that was brought to the slaughter, then see to it, that you can also trace this holy trait of fellowship with your Savior in your own soul and in your own life.

This world is not your Father-house. Your native land is above. And if you truly are God's child, you can not do otherwise than clash with that world. It is not yours and you are not of it. And the stronger and braver you dare to come out for your Savior, the more you will observe, that that world withdraws its love from you and offers you its hatred in exchange.

This occasions you all sorts of offence and all sorts of hindrances. It brings you all sorts of trouble and all sorts of difficulties. It causes you all sorts of derision, disdain and injury. Sometimes also monetary losses, opposition from your children, prevention against spreading out your wings, limitation and oppression from every side.

But in that case it is not enough, that if needs be you accept this for Jesus' sake, and that despite this suffering you do not deny your Savior.

The bullock had to be bound with ropes to the horns of the altar; but with the lamb no such exercise of violence was necessary.

And so likewise for you the entering upon that suffering should not be a bending to necessity; no endurance of this suffering with anger and bitterness of heart; so that, if only you were able, you would

angrily resist it and cast the yoke from you. No, he who as Christian, would suffer for Christ's sake, let him go willingly after His Savior as a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

In moments of suffering, God's child *wills* to suffer, rejoices in that adversity, kisses the rod that strikes and wounds, and so unfolds that Christian beauty, which glistens in the holy art of *endurance* and *forbearance.*

You yourself should take up your cross, and *cheerfully* carry it after your Lord and Savior. Not with a cheerfulness which is of the world, but with a *holy* cheerfulness, which is wrought in you of God.

XXII.

WEEP NOT FOR ME (I)

TROUBLE COOLS and in the end deadens all sympathizing love. When trouble overcomes and overwhelms us, the impression readily gains ground, that other people's troubles are less severe; that our sorrow is far more bitter than theirs; and that while it is the behest of love that other people should take an interest in the things we suffer, it is more than can be expected of us that we should add to our trouble by sharing theirs.

When our own trouble reaches a certain height, it seems to discharge us from duty, of sharing the trouble of others.

This does not apply to all trouble.

When in a shipwreck you saw all your treasures and goods sink away in the depths, while the other man saw his wife and child drown before his eyes, how could you be so inhuman, when saved together with him, as to complain to him about your lost gold and silver, and not sympathize with him in his loss of wife and child?

No, this dulling of compassionate love only shows itself when your trouble makes, as it were, the waters to rise to the lips, and the other man's trouble is scarcely comparable with yours.

Sometimes this seems different. As when your trouble and that of the other man is alike in kind and character. When two men are carried away from the battle-field, and each is to have a leg amputated, they both will be strongly inclined to sympathize with each other. But here appearance deceives,

for such sharing in the trouble of one another merely means that in the trouble of the one, the other justifies himself for being obsessed with his own.

When you eliminate such exceptions, and watch a sufferer who has to endure great suffering, and in whose company others suffer, you will see the egoism of sorrow sanctify itself, and you will notice in everything, that sometimes even at the cost of aggravating the pains of others, the sufferer will ask compassion for himself.

And when the difference is very striking, so that the trouble of one is really harder and more tragic than that of the other, lack of like compassion frequently makes him who bears the greater affliction feel offended and indignant, when every one else, the lesser sufferer included, is not almost exclusively interested in *his* trouble, and does not offer *him* commiseration and sympathy.

But now see your Savior.

See Him, upon whose lips has been placed with such perfect right the word from Lamentations: "All ye that pass by, behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

Nowhere and at no time has the weight of sorrow and woe pressed heavier on any human heart, than upon His, when He had to drink to the dregs, the cup that could not pass.

Not because bodily torture was the most painful, for through every age monstrous cruelty has known how to torture man to death in far more horrible ways than was done to Jesus on Golgotha.

But man is not mere body. Suffering affects body *and soul,* and because the soul hides more deeply within us, torture of soul can far exceed all torture of body.

And deep suffering of soul increases in proportion as the soul is more finely strung, and the suffering more overwhelming.

The church has ever confessed, therefore, that no suffering of any child of man, was ever equal to the suffering of your Savior; to the suffering of Him, Whose inner life exceeds in tenderness all of ours, and Who in that delicate sensitive life of the soul bore and endured, not a measure of God's dreadful wrath, but its fulness. *All* the wrath of the Almighty against *all* our guilty race.

To deem that because of our sorrow the suffering of Christ in our perception can be relegated to the background, has always seemed to the soul that believed a sacreligious thought.

His has been the holiest, the most dreadful, the utmost limit of human suffering. Suffering to which every believing sufferer has looked up, that he might feel his own suffering less keenly.

And yet, sinking away under the wrath of God, neither on the way to Golgotha, nor when dying on the wood of shame, did your Savior allow commiseration with the sorrow of others, to cool for one moment.

For Mary it was dreadful, as mother, to stand by the Cross, and to see her wonder child succumb and die in His mortal sorrows.

Here was the sword that was to pierce through her soul.

A pain of soul, such as no other mother has suffered for her child.

But yet what was *her* sorrow compared with the suffering of Christ Himself?

Nevertheless Jesus can find commiseration in His heart for the sorrow of His mother.

He looks at her, He thinks of her, and from His lips there flows in the: "Mother, behold thy son" a word of precious comforting.

On the cross alongside of Jesus' cross hangs a former malefactor struggling with death.

That man had fallen deeply, but by Jesus' greatness had been regained. Could he come down from the cross with Jesus, how he would fall upon his knees, and speak for Him throughout the land, and supplicate that he might be His disciple.

But he feels death already in his veins. He is about to die. And now his soul is consumed with the anxious inquiry: Is there still a chance of eternal salvation for me?

And Jesus limns that suffering of soul, and with the deepest commiseration of His heart, He relieves the sufferer from anxiety, saying unto him: "*This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

. . . . . .

Then there were those soldiers, will-less, thoughtless instruments of Pilate's unrighteous sentence.

Rough men, who themselves had nothing against Jesus. Agents, who did as they were told. But who, even so, incurred the terrible guilt of having put hands upon the Holy One of God.

How dreadful would once their regret be, that eternal regret in the place of misery.

And Jesus fathoms that dreadfulness in their eternal future, and commiseraton with a distress, which they themselves do not yet guess, wakes in His sensitive heart.

And Jesus prays for those miserable accomplices of injustice: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

And do not say, that this exalted feeling of Jesus only awoke, when death had withdrawn Him already more than half way from life.

For already on the way *to* Golgotha you find with your Savior this altogether selfsame commiseration of compassionate love.

There were women on the way who from out the gate, accompanied Jesus on the sad journey to Golgotha.

Women of the people, such as were seen at every execution. Curious by nature. Highly emotional. Seeking excitement in just such an execution where everything of a striking and thrilling character affects outward feeling.

Women, whose eyes readily glistened with a tear, and who yet took pleasure through their tears to witness the dying of a man on the cross.

The benefit and the judgment of what superficially floats upon sentiment.

Tears in which spake nothing but an operation of nature without depth, without an holier fellow-feeling.

But though you may not attach much significance to the weeping of those women on the way to Golgotha, it yet reconciles you to human nature, that Jesus' suffering is not *merely* mocked, and scorned, and devilishly ridiculed, but that among that yelling, turbulent rabble there are also those, who, be it offensively superficial, yet feel *some* compassion for Jesus' suffering, and because of Him have a tear in their eye.

And does Jesus thank those women for that weeping in His behalf, and does He utter so much as one word by way of soliciting pity from others?

Nothing, nothing of this.

On the contrary Jesus rather rejects those tears, shed for His suffering's sake, and says to those women: Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, for presently, ye thoughtless women of Jerusalem, your own suffering shall be appalling.

Thus what fascinates you in Jesus' suffering is the greatness of a love, which, while it triumphed over His own nameless agonies, was still able most strongly to arouse compassion for the sorrows of others.

Here is more than the human, here shines forth something of the golden glow of Divine love in the human spoken word, and looking into that love of your Savior, you worship in Him your Lord and your God.

And yet, something of that selfsame love, an after-glow of which since Golgotha has held the world enthralled, has also been seen in a few saints of our race.

There have been sufferers, both men and women, who, in fellowship with Golgotha bearing their own bitter afflictions in their own troubled heart, have at length overcome the egoism of their sorrow.

Not entirely, not always, not in full. They remained sinners.

But so, that in their bitter grief they have known moments in which, forgetting their own troubles, from the root of faith within, they have felt the stirrings of pity for others in distress, even for those who had wronged them.

But they made no boast of it.

No, they thanked their God for it, and freely confessed, that it was the Man of sorrows, Who had wrought that work of love in them.

XXIII.

WEEP NOT FOR ME (II)

TO SEE A TEAR trickle down the face of *another*, because of what *you* suffer, especially when that other one is a stranger to you, does not remove, but mitigates your sorrow.

And as He suffered, your Savior was susceptible of that mitigation.

His complaint to Peter: "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" shows this. Not in His Divine nature, but as *man*, Jesus has struggled through His grievous suffering and His bitter death, and hence also under that suffering has longed for human comforting.

By itself the weeping of those women of Jerusalem was something lovely to Jesus. Together with Simon of Cyrene, who carried His cross, these women are the only friendly appearance in this awful drama.

Everything and every one was against Jesus. Judas betrays Him. The three faithful sleep when mortal anguish consumes His soul. Peter denies Him. All His disciples flee. The Sanhedrin is fanatically passionate. Herod disdainfully superior. The chief watch callous, fond of mocking. Pilate philosophically base. The rabble outside the house of judgment yells shrilly and cruelly against Him. On Golgotha it becomes one blasphemous taunt of demoniac hatred.

You are ashamed of our human race, that in all this drama it can act so treacherously, so shamefully fanatical, so wildly passionate, and can look upon suffering with such demoniac scorn.

But just because the entire spectacle of Jesus' suffering and dying is darkened by so black a shadow, these tiny sparklings of human commiseration are precious to you.

Simon, who carried the cross for Jesus, when He fainted under its weight, and was no more able to support it. And those women, who began to weep when they saw His pitiful plight.

Too much significance should not be attached to the weeping of those women. If, instead of running along from the back streets, those same women had stood on the square before the house of judgment at Gabbatha, they would most probably have joined the rabble in their cry: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

A mob moves to and fro as the impulse of the moment drives it. And therefore on Gabbatha it was one great cry for Jesus' blood. And here outside the gate it was one lamentation, that this holy interesting man had to die.

Such a feeling of commiseration on the part of a crowd never goes deep. There is more nervous emotion in it than heart. When one starts crying, the others cry too. It is the immediate sight of suffering that arrests attention. It is the tragic that affects. A wild bandit who is on the way to the scaffold, arouses curiosity to see how he is executed. But the very appearance of Jesus carried the impression of high nobility. He who, especially at that moment, looked upon Him, must have been strangely moved by the holy expression of His face. And Jesus was only thirty-three years old. And then to be led out not merely to the place of punishment, but to death, and to the hardest death, the death of the cross, the death of curse and shame. That made the contrast so strong. And that contrast took hold

of the feeling of those women. The eyes became moist. First with one, then with more. Finally it attracted every one's attention. Till Jesus also saw it, and heard what they lamented.

An utterance of *human* feeling for the Son of *man* in the throes of death.

And as these women run ahead, and press in upon Him, Jesus breaks His course to Golgotha, and stands still; turns Himself to those women, and addresses them.

Not to thank them. Far less to rouse their emotions yet the more. No word comes across His lips that hints at His own sorrow.

Jesus rather rejects their commiseration, saying: "Weep not for me."

Jesus stops those emotional tears of superficial sorrow, because there speaks no seriousness in them, no understanding of the condition, no faint idea of the reality. What did those weeping women sense of the fact, that here the Lamb of God was being led to the slaughter, and that in this holy drama before their eyes the suit between God and Satan, the suit between eternal corruption and heavenly glory for all God's elect was being decided.

Human feeling also has its *relative* value, but only relative. What makes it holy is the seriousness of life, the study of the past and future. And of that seriousness of life there was no evidence here.

See how Jesus calls these women away from indulging their emotions to the stern seriousness of their own future, saying: "Ye, daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, *but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*"

Those children probably stood by and ran about

among them. Such women running out from the back streets are in the habit of taking their children with them. There may have been among them women with their suckling on the arm. There may have been among them those who were pregnant, who still carried their little one under the heart.

At least, so, in holy seriousness, and with eyes deeply expressive of a more than human commiseration, Jesus went on to say: "For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck" (Luke 23:29).

Jesus has in mind the wrath of God, that is to break loose upon guilty Jerusalem. And the terrible times, such as had once already been experienced, when Jerusalem had fallen before the armies of Babylon, and when "the fathers had eaten their sons and the sons their fathers" (Ezek. 5:10).

But presently, after Golgotha, it would be still more dreadful. A bloody extermination such as no city has almost ever known. Days so horrible, that every soul in terror would seek death, and say: "O, Mountains, fall on us, and, ye hills, Cover us" (Luke 23: 30).

Then the weeping ceased, and Jesus continued His weary journey to the Place of a skull.

There was this glorious moment.

In the midst of His mortal anguish, Jesus forgetting Himself and His woe, that with all His soul, and with all the human pity that stirred the life of His soul, He might have part in the terrible punishment that awaited Jerusalem.

But no one understood Him.

That Jerusalem might once again be sacked was

possible. But what had that future desolation to do with this sentenced One, Who was being led out to the place of punishment?

Jerusalem, yea, even the women of Jerusalem, who were always more tenderly emotional, did not understand nor comprehend, that Jerusalem existed for *the sake of God,* and that by introducing before the exile its idolatry into the temple of God, it had angered the Almighty so terribly, and therefore had then been so mortally afflicted.

Still less did Jerusalem understand what now, on Golgotha, was about to take place, when the city that God had chosen, would do the daring act of nailing God's own dear Son, the promise of the fathers, the Messiah of Israel as a blasphemer to the Cross.

Those women saw it before their eyes, and yet they saw nothing of it. All the significance of what they there saw before them, escaped them. It was an abyss covered with flowers, across which they trod. And they did not feel, that they themselves took part in the murder, even while they wept for Jesus; for if they, with all Jerusalem's women, had stood true, and in Jesus had recognized God's Anointed, with their husbands and sons they would have fallen at His feet, and would have worshiped Him as their Lord and their God.

They stood there weeping, but it was in their unbelief. They themselves were casting out the Anointed of God. They disregarded Him, because they did not know Him. And with their unbelieving mind and hardened heart, they could not know Him.

They think that Caiaphas and Pilate are the cruel ones, and they the pitiful and the tender-hearted women. And this they are not. They themselves are the accomplices. Those women are from

the rabble classes of Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem rejects its King and Savior, and rushes out from the city-gate, that yonder on Golgotha it might look upon His cross.

And for your Savior this is another aggravation of woe.

Him they go to crucify, and dying in the most bitter anguish of God-forsakenness He shall succumb, but that shall not be the end of it.

His cross shall have a sequel.

Before the year of the crucifixion is over and another half a century is past, comes the year of the destruction of Jerusalem, and then the viols of God's holy wrath shall be poured out upon the sin-city, that it shall become one outcry of mortal agony in all Jerusalem's streets.

That must needs be. That could not be averted.

The Cross must needs be there, to save the world; but the Cross is not possible, save as it must be bitterly avenged upon the sin-city, that dared to plant it. For had they not, defying God, said in the market-square: "His blood come upon us and upon our children!"

And it would come upon them, *and upon their children.* And Jesus sees those mothers standing there, whose children would then be men of thirty, forty years old, and would suffer awful tortures and great slaughter. All the walls of Jerusalem sown as it were with crosses, and on each cross a cursing Jew, who hung there dying, as mock-likeness of that *one* cross, on which Jerusalem had crucified her King.

On the way to the cross Jesus foresees all this. Those women that weep for Him, make the shudder-

ing scenes of that awful judgment loom up before His spirit.

Jesus feels that although He is not the cause, He is at least the middle link by which that awful suffering shall come upon Jerusalem.

And must not this aggravate His own suffering, Who had so touchingly declared: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" (Matt. 23:37).

And now, in the Passion-weeks once more, do not people do even as these women did?

They follow Jesus step by step on His dark way of suffering. It may not be by stations, and with each station a scene from Jesus passion painted upon wood. But even then with stations in the imagination. And so they pass again through all the sufferings of the Savior, till Easter comes, and the sound of wailing is turned into the jubilation of redemption.

But what avails it, when this goes no further than following Jesus' suffering with the eye of weak emotionalism, while the eye of the soul does not perceive in Him the Anointed of God, and sensitive men and sensitive women do not come to conversion, and do not die with Christ on the cross, that when Jesus rises they may rise with Him?

Worse yet, how often has the suffering of Jesus moistened sensitive eyes, which presently have crucified the Son of God afresh by their apostacy in sin!

And what is all such feeling without faith other, and what is it better, than the weeping of those

women outside Jerusalem? Weeping for Jesus, and actually adding gall to the suffering of the Savior, by the judgment which they are bringing down upon themselves.

And therefore do not do as those women did, but rather direct the eye to a Simon of Cyrene, of whom it is not recorded that he wept, but, that he carried the cross of Jesus.

He carried it ahead of Jesus. Do you carry it following after your Savior?

You know that the Man of sorrows said to His disciples: "He that taketh not his cross, and carrieth it, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38).

XXIV

AS A SHEEP BEFORE HER SHEARERS IS DUMB

IN ALL GOD'S CREATURES, including the animal and the vegetable-kingdoms, there lies a glorious symbolism, the rich significance of which Scripture only rarely discloses.

A symbolism in the grain of wheat, that falls into the earth and dies, and in the Vine, that bears fruit upon its branches. And so likewise a symbolism in the Dove, coming down upon its wings, and in the Lamb, that bleats plaintively as it is led to pasture, and is dumb before him who shears or slaughters it.

Holy is this symbolism to us, because it cleaves to the Person and appearance of Him, Who has bought us with His blood. He is the Grain of wheat, that must die lest it remain alone; He, the Vine, that communicates its life-sap to all its branches; upon Him the Dove descended, that He might be filled with the Holy Ghost without measure; and so above all else, He, our Jesus, is the Lamb, that goes to the slaughter, the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world, the Lamb that is dumb before the face of its shearers.

So was the suffering of the Man of sorrows.

Not in the literal sense, as though during all the hours of His passion He spake no word. Judas learned this in the garden, when the Lord cut him through his evil soul with His dreadful word. Caiaphas found this otherwise, when Jesus prophecied to him of the Son of man, Who would come upon the clouds. This affected Pilate deeply when Jesus showed him the hollowness and emptiness of his sceptical sense of truth.

No, in this sense, Jesus in His suffering was not dumb. Rather He spoke relatively much. Even on the cross seven times. Just before He died: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The voicelessness of the Lamb lies in holding back the cry of opposition to suffering.

In the outcry with which the sensitive creature rebels against suffering, there is a means of defence. So the child in the cradle cries when he has pain. So the child in the street screams when he suffers injury. So, there is a cry of resistance in the lips of every one, when he is violently attacked or confused by fright. So cries and moans and howls the animal when it is beaten or feels pain. And when presently to the cry there is added the opposition of resistance and the frenzied animal turns on his tormentor, then the cry and the anger are one. It is the instinctive sense not to will to suffer, but to resist pain and injury.

And without insisting that a lamb never moans and never resists, yet, more than any other animal, the lamb makes the impression upon us of surrendering itself helplessly and defencelessly to its fate. This animal is altogether created for this effect. Defencelessness is its expression. Especially when it goes to death, the lamb arouses your commiseration. To slaughter a lamb requires more mastery over your feeling than the slaughter of a bullock or ox.

And in this general sense the figurative language of the Lamb in its application to Jesus must be understood.

He did not resist. When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He is taunted and mocked,

He prays for His enemies. He drinks the cup which the Father has given Him, with perfect self-control, with the will to drink it to the last drop.

And this is the deep discernment of the mystery of suffering.

There is also a suffering that is intended to stimulate our adaptability. The thorns and thistles of the earth spur Adam on to seek his bread in the sweat of his brow. The roaring lion that attacks a man, puts him on his mettle manfully to struggle to save his life. The storm that breaks loose upon the waters, impels the seaman with heroic courage to battle the hurricane. All sorts of diseases and ailments force human ingenuity to draw healing from the herbs of the ground. In brief, there are all sorts of harm and danger on every hand, which are not intended, to have us behave under them as the lamb, but which with heroic courage and power of will we must combat.

But this is merely the bark and not the kernel, not the heart, of the mystery of suffering.

Beyond the suffering that comes upon us by nature, there is also a suffering which man brings upon man; and in human wickedness we detect the venom, that Satan spews out upon us.

There is carping vexation that must be battled through, cruel disappointment under which the human heart has to toil; dreadful homesickness of heart, under which the weary soul must give way. And then there is all that multitudinous host of intentional vexation in slander, scorn and insult; presently in spitting upon one's face, and in putting hands upon one's body with all sorts of scourgings and woundings to the death, yea, to the death of the

cross. And as though this were not enough, all this is made still worse by putting slander and cross together; by pronouncing sentence of guilt upon the poor innocent man; and then guiltless yet doomed to abandon him to the hatred and scornful affrontery of all.

This is real, this is altogether soul-agonizing suffering. A suffering that goads us, but in this incitement poisons the soul, and does not rouse us to manly courage and exercise of will-power, but to revenge, bitterness and hate.

And here is the test.

When suffering brings this urge upon you, and you allow this urge to work itself out to its last instance, it brings you utter defeat.

But likewise, when you learn to resist this urge of Satan's venom and defenceless as the lamb, suffer such suffering to come upon you, then you triumph.

The inmost kernel of this suffering Jesus alone has tasted in all its bitterness.

Not because there are no people who have been more cruelly tortured. Many martyrs, men and women, have suffered far more terrible barbarities.

For consider well, the bitterness of this suffering increases, not so much in proportion to severer torture, but in proportion to the vexation of soul. It is the *innocent* suffering, which here makes the anguish more keen. And therefore Jesus alone *could* fathom this suffering in all its terrible depth.

We *never* suffer guiltless. In the sin of all our own sin lies inwoven. The wickedness that breaks loose against us is our own wickedness, spying us and laying snares from the heart of others. It is the

common hatred, which has its rise from sin, in which we all are implicated.

But here it was the pure, the holy, the sinless, the guiltless. He Who had no part in anything unholy, Who did not lie entangled in a single root-fibre of sin with the fibres of His own heart. He Who never knew hatred other than that against Satan. Incarnate Love itself.

Herein alone the incomparable depth of the suffering of the Lord must be sought. Every other comparison falls short of the purpose. Only thus stands His suffering *unique* among all suffering in all the passion-histories of mankind.

So alone is He *the* Man of sorrows, because He alone was truly *the* Servant of God.

And see, the urge of His human perception, to oppose this deepest of all suffering with His good right, with His spotless conscience, with all the excellency of His cause, this urge He has extinguished, He has dulled, He has smothered in His inmost soul.

So is He become the Lamb of God.

He did not look at the stone, but at Him who cast that stone. He withdrew His eye from the saw, and looked alone on Him, Whose hand drew the saw. A Judas, a Caiaphas, a Pilate, they were altogether instruments, nothing more. He, from Whom this nameless suffering came upon Him, was His own Father, His Father in the heavens. No, Pilate, no, Caiaphas, no, Judas, you would have no power against Me, were it not given you from above!

Because God willed that He should suffer, therefore He *willed* to suffer.

Whether this cost Him no conflict, ask the shadow of Gethsemane's olives.

That urge to resist it, and that knowledge: God wills it! clashed so cruelly in His human heart.

But when it became altogether clear again to Him and so heavenly transparent: *God wills this suffering,* there was no more hesitation for one moment.

See, then He went out from Gethsemane to Golgotha, He, the Lamb of God, that took away the sin of the world.

XXV.

A WORM AND NO MAN

THE "MAN" must become a "worm" and the "worm" a "man"! Does not this deep thought contain all the mystery of our holy and precious Gospel?

Again the passion-weeks go on apace, and again, at the responsibility of the church, the cross of Jesus is pictured as before our eyes. And what is this Lenten preaching other, than to show you step by step, how that "Man" became a *worm* and finally curved Himself in the dust of death.

The first mystery, that of Bethlehem's manger, spells out to you, how, He Who was "God", became a "*man*"; but the second, of which Golgotha's cross forms the center, shows you how now that "Man" humbled Himself again and debased Himself to a "*worm*".

"After me comes *a man,*" the Baptist said, "Who was before me, the lachet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose!" pointing therewith to Him, of Whom it was already said at Peniel in Gen. 32:24 : "*A Man* wrestled with Jacob"; of Whom in Joshua's vision it was said: "*A Man* stood over against him" (Joshua 5:13); Who as "*a man* clothed with linen" was seen by Ezekiel and Daniel; Who to Zechariah was "*the man* that stood among the myrtle trees" (Zech. 1:10); of Whom it had been prophecied that this "Man shall be as a hiding place from the wind" (Isa. 32:2); "*a Man* Whose name is The BRANCH" (Zech. 6:12); of Whom it would be said in the hour of dreadful decision: "O sword, awake against *the*

Man, that is my fellow" (13:7); and Whose most deeply touching name would therefore be "Man *of sorrows*" (Isa. 53:3).

Power, strength, majesty lie expressed in that *Man.* We, the altogether weak, the helpless, miserable ones, who flee to Him for help and protection, and He, the strong man, Who covers us with the arm of His power and turns aside the adversary from us.

A MAN, yea, when He made the Devil to cower before Him in the wilderness; when He dominated the thousands by His word; when He rebuked diseases so that sicknesses gave way; when He cast out devils so that they slunk off; when He caused the Pharisees to tremble before His look; when He rebuked the storm; caused the sea to obey Him; stronger yet, when He overpowered death in Lazarus' grave; yea, even yet in Gethsemane, when everything shrank back from before Him and He cast down His captors in the dust.

But can He remain that *Man?* Can He by breaking through as *Man* in our behalf, help you and me to go through? (Micah 2:13). Can He go through *might* to triumph, through *strength* to victory, does the *arm of His potency* lead us to conquest?

And to this, God's holy Word says, no; and again, no; if that man becomes no *worm,* the "worm Jacob" can not be delivered.

If the corn of wheat will not fall from its high stalk and sink into the earth and die, it does not touch the lost; it remains alone and can bear no fruit unto eternal redemption.

Consider well, *we are no more men!* All our strength is dried up as a potsherd. A child of man,

conceived and born in sin, lies actually in the dust, and is become like unto a worm.

Naked, sin has stripped us. There is nothing sound left of us; and even our best deeds are still, as has been said with perfect truth, *dishonoring* God.

One glory after another has fallen away from us.

There is still a *semblance;* but *no* reality left.

Mouldered joists are we, which break at a touch.

Hollowed out willows, in which the night owl builds his nest, and with which winds play.

Job knew this well when he exclaimed: "The stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, that is a *maggot,* and the son of man, which is a *worm*!" (25:6).

And oh, if we but *willed* to be this; if we would but realize that that is what we are; and as "poor worms" would crawl before God in the dust!

But this that mouldered joist will not do! No, that "mouldered joist still presents itself as a "sound beam", and yet wills to be a support, and deems that a house can rest upon its bearing-power.

Thus dreams the worm in the dream of its pride, *that he is still a man!*

Terrible self-delusion!

And then that "small dust on the balance" yet opens its mouth against its God and that worm murmurs godlessly against the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth.

And see, for this reason Jesus had to be laid so deep in the dust of death. What you, because of your proud heart, would *not* do *for your God,* that, from compassion, He would come and do *for you.*

There He stands the strong hero, the glorious Man in all the strength of His might. Lion of the tribe of Judah! And now, that Lion drops his mane;

that hero casts away His quiver; that Man bows the head; kneels down in the dust, and lets all the burden of God's wrath come down upon Himself, until He succumbs under its weight, and sinks down in the dust of death, and now as one despised and trodden under foot, by His crawling in the dust, He is become like unto the *worm.*

So was He despised *and we esteemed Him not.*

For whose heart still thrills with holy indignation, when he hears *the Man* complain: "I am a worm!" (Psalm 22:6).

Speak not of the admiration which the cross has quickened, tell me not of the love for Jesus that has inspired song.

All such superficial talk about that terrible descent into the eternal death, is but another crown of thorns, which you press upon the yet bleeding head of the Man of sorrows.

They who say this, do not understand it, do not fathom it, surmise it not from far.

He who has not learned from the Father, in some measure at least to fathom the nameless mystery of this most nameless anguish, still plants his foot on the breast of that Sufferer, still tramples that worm a little deeper into the dust of death, yea, tramples under foot His blood!

Not one here and one there, no, but *all.*

That, you have done, that I have done!

There is only one, who no more does it, and that one is called *the worm Jacob.*

And who is that?

That is every young man and woman, every young and old of days, every freeman and every bondman, who first undertook to vindicate himself, and say: "This is right, Jesus the worm and I the

man"; and upon whom then the Holy Ghost is come, to bruise his wicked and proud heart, to chastise and to break it; till at length he learned to know himself as a poor worm, and now, himself lying in the dust, awards the Only Precious One the palm of Victory, and says: "I, by the grace of God the worm, and He alone THE MAN.

XXVI

THEY CRUCIFIED HIM

IN THE EIGHTH YEAR of the reign of emperor Tiberius, ten years before the Crucifixion of our Lord, a decree had been passed in the Senate, by which, in every part of the Roman empire all those who were under sentence of death, were granted ten days reprieve, before the sentence could be executed.

But with it the provision had been made, that in the case of one who had instigated an insurrection, or who was deemed a menace to public order, the judge could appoint *immediate execution.*

This last provision Pilate applied to Jesus.

Our Lord was not granted "postponement of execution". Evidently Pilate was not at ease. He feared an outbreak of Jewish fanaticism. And it is this anxiety on the part of Pilate, aggravated by the gnawings of his conscience, which explains why Jesus, after having been awake all night long and having been arrested before dawn, without a moment's relief, had to endure all His suffering at once, and only in His death reach the end of that agony.

Then four soldiers had been ordered, under the command of an officer, to execute upon Jesus the sentence of crucifixion; and it was this officer with the four soldiers under his command, who took Jesus off Pilate's hands.

What was required for crucifixion, needed no preparation, for it was ready at hand. The cross, the spade, the nails, the ropes, the jug of myrrhed wine, and the jug of vinegar. And so they took their

way to Golgotha. Spade and nails, rope and jug the soldiers carried, but the cross Jesus Himself must bear.

That cross He must carry, not merely a short distance, but first through the whole city, all the streets from the house of judgment to the gate, and then from the gate to the place of a skull.

That crossbearing did not mean that the condemned could carry it as he pleased, but the cross was placed over his left shoulder, with the crossbeam in front, to which both his hands were bound.

This readily accounts for the fact, that exhausted by so great an exertion, and the strain of stirred emotions for so many hours, Jesus soon succumbed under the weight of the cross.

Already on the way to Golgotha the strength of human nature began to fail Him.

At length arrived at Golgotha, the soldiers dug a hole in the ground, in it set up the cross, trampled down the ground, till the cross stood firmly fixed; and all this while Jesus stood by speechless, and inwardly trembling at what was to come.

For when the cross was erected, the soldiers laid hands on Jesus; took off not only the upper garment, but also the rest of the clothes from His body; and as a criminal no longer worthy of so much as a covering, while people stood about looking on, He stood in their midst.

Provisionally they laid aside that robe and the clothes, in order presently to divide and to cast lots for them, and then they proceeded to the actual crucifixion.

The cross in those days did not stand very high,

usually the malefactor did not hang more than two feet above the ground.

At the lower part of the cross a small beam projected, on which the victim was placed with the legs hanging down by the sides. And while one of the soldiers held him back against the cross, two others bound His hands to the crossbeam, and drove the nails through the hands.

Finally the two feet were turned to the cross, and while one soldier held them in place, the other drove the nails through the feet, each foot separately pressed against the wood.

And when He was crucified, they took the jug of myrrhed wine, to intoxicate Him, that the agonies of dying on that tree might not be so dreadful. But Jesus refused. The anguish of the suffering must not be dulled for a moment.

When Jesus refused, the soldiers did not persist.

With them now rested the appropriation of the booty, the division of Jesus' garments among themselves.

And then they sat down near the cross, and the centurion stayed by to look on.

And Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Soon after the darkness set in.

Darkness like that of night swathed the cross and the hill that bore it.

And thus Jesus hung on the cross to die. And the women and acquaintances, that stood by, trembled in woefulness of heart.

Only the fanatical priests took pleasure in the sight of Jesus' death-struggle.

Altogether different from the Roman officer who stood by, and though he did not understand, yet

from moment to moment felt ever more strongly, ever more clearly, that here no ordinary execution took place, but that it implied a combat between earth and heaven.

The "Truly, this is the Son of God", he will exclaim only later, but already in advance it trembled in his heart, whether in Jesus he had not committed a crime against a being of an higher order.

So the crucifixion of Jesus on Golgotha may actually have taken place, as from careful investigation it is learned, how in those days the Romans were accustomed to execute death by the cross.

Had you been there, this is what you would have witnessed. And when the Apostle Paul writes to the churches of Galatia (3:1) that Jesus Christ "had been evidently set forth, crucified before their eyes", it is evident that we too should let our imagination have free rein with respect to this, and live as it were the dreadful scene over again, and meditate upon it, as though we were eye-witnesses of the same.

Also the picture and painting may come to our help in this matter, provided it is unadorned, real and true.

It is even incredible what a deep impression upon the soul a truly speaking likeness of Jesus' crucifixion can make.

And yet, even when this striking spectacle stands clearly and actually before our eyes, let no one think that this is all.

Yea, we would almost say, that he who saw all this as before his eyes, saw but a small part of what really there took place.

There was on Golgotha still so much more than

could be observed with the eye, and which in a higher sense was equally real and actual.

Already that officer saw more than the soldiers under him. Much more saw Jesus' acquaintances who stood afar off. And what must not a Mary, a John, who stood there as though stupified, have perceived, and endured, and suffered, of what even that officer and those acquaintances had no faint surmise.

There took place on Golgotha not alone a palpable execution, but much more yet a *spiritual* struggle, which went on in the blood of the soul, and of which nothing was seen or observed by those whose eyes were blind to what happens in the spiritual world.

Mary and the disciples, who were not entirely blind, saw something of it. But yet, they only saw flitting shadows, and from on high God alone saw in full clearness, what by and during the crucifixion, and on the cross, has been fought out by Jesus' spirit against Satan and his demoniac spirits; what in that hour of superhuman suffering has been endured, to save a world eternally; how that cross was truly an altar; and how upon that altar the Lamb of God brought His Self-Offering to the finish, that the right of His Father might triumph.

No one, said Jesus, knoweth the Son save the Father, and in this hour there was no creature, man or angel, that has fathomed this fathomless depth of Jesus' suffering.

Of men uncomprehended, and known of His Father alone, did Jesus go under in this black darkness of death.

And therefore never say, that you at least have understood Golgotha.

You may have surmised *something* of it, and in

love for your Savior you may live it over again with Him, but what that cup, which the Father had given Him to drink, contained, you will never *know.*

This He alone understood, Who had mingled that cup of suffering for the Son of His love, to save you.

And yet, there is something of that cross of Golgotha, which the Holy Spirit reveals to every one of God's elect, in a particular way, that is valid for him alone.

On that cross Jesus bare our sin. So the apostles bear witness. So the church of Christ has confessed through all ages. So is the witness borne also in your own heart.

Our sins!

Yours, mine, those of all our brothers and sisters, who have been re-born unto life.

And what do you know, what do you understand of it better than *your own sins,* and who knows, who understands *your* sins better than God and your self?

And therefore, when the Holy Ghost, by the light of the Word, leads you into the knowledge of the depth of your sin, in that knowledge of your sins the Comforter of your heart but offers you a standard by which you may learn to understand the suffering and the dying of your Savior in an entirely singular, an altogether personal way, that so the dying Christ can meet your case; can move you inwardly; can quicken you to love Him in return; and can become to you the rich, full revelation of the atoning, compassionate, cleansing grace of your God.

Thus there are two ways in which to experience Golgotha in your own soul, to be crucified with

Jesus, and to die with Him, that you may also live with Him.

One way Scripture opens before you, as it describes what took place visibly, and indicates the mystery of Golgotha.

This way is open to all.

But the second way is personal; to be trodden by every soul separately and alone. It is the way through the depths; through the knowledge of your own heart; through the self-accusation of your sinful existence, and sinful life, and discarded grace.

And when consciously you sink away in this sea of your sins, and learn that with all Jesus' suffering, you added this to it, that you also laid the burden of your sins upon your dying Savior, then you understand, that upon Golgotha there has been suffered something altogther other than the piercing of the hands and the feet.

A piercing of the soul of your Savior; a wounding Him, which not the soldiers, but which together with all God's saints, you have done.

XXVII.

JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS

IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD he who is *Emperor,* places all *Kings* in the shadow. Only in the *Emperor*-title does a mighty monarchy find the complete fullness of its glory.

Austria had its Emperor, Germany had its Emperor, France had its Emperor. England for the sake of its colonies has changed itself into an Empire. And also Russia's Czar, however incorrectly, has been called the Emperor of Russia.

This practice is even more general still, and free mention is made of the Emperor of Turkey, the Emperor of China, the Emperor of Japan.

"King" has almost become a secondhand title. Only recently it was still King of Prussia, King of Saxony, King of Wurtemburg. Even a King of Serbia—but it was *Emperor* of Germany.

With respect to this it is noteworthy, that in Holy Scripture no other or higher title is ever applied to God and to His Christ than that of *King.* Also, that to indicate that the dominion of the Lord God is likewise over the Kings in the earth, no other expression is ever used than that of "King of kings and Lord of lords".

The domain of God is always called the *"King-dom* of heaven."

And even now it would offend our sense of piety, yea it would be unthinkable, to speak of God as *Emperor,* or of Jesus as Emperor Jesus.

Yet this deserves close attention.

For in the days when Jesus was on earth, and

suffered and died, the emperor's title stood far higher than now. There was but *one* emperor. But that *one* emperor bare rule over the *entire then-known world.*

What would have been more natural, than to apply to Jesus, Who was to be King not over any one country in particular, but King *over the whole world,* that illustrious, majestic and highly exalted title of *Emperor.*

And yet, this has not been done.

Even on Patmos, at the close of the Special Revelation, Christ gives Himself no other title than that of "King of kings and Lord of lords"; and to His believers it is said, not that as emperors with the Emperor, but that as kings they shall rule with Jesus their King.

The cause of this lies at hand.

The Kingly dignity has come up from the life of the nations organically, in a natural way; the Imperial authority has imposed itself upon the nations mechanically, by violence and might.

The Imperial power is Caesarism, Imperialism. And again and again history has shown to what atrocity as of itself the Imperial idea leads.

Hence it is of supreme significance, that Pontius Pilate, who, as representative of Rome's Emperor, at the cost of the violation of right, condemned Jesus to death, and placed as superscription above His cross: *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.*

"Yet have I anointed my King over Zion" reads Jehovah's witness in the second Psalm, and that Psalm ends with the prophecy, that the "Kings of the earth" shall bend the knee before that King of Zion.

Over against that divinely anointed King the

world-power under the Roman Emperor had lifted up itself. Also Palestine had been overpowered by the Imperial eagle. And when on Gabbatha Jesus appeared before Pilate, these two powers stood personified in Pilate and Jesus over against one another. The Christ, to Whom God as His King had given all power in heaven and on earth, and the lord-lieutenant of the Roman Emperor, who by force of arms had won dominion over the entire then-known world.

And in connection with this it is so striking, that, under the leading of the Lord, the imperial power nailed its own judgment above the cross of Jesus.

For did not the Kingship itself, which Christ received from God, imply the most absolute and sharpest condemnation of all Rome's imperial power?

Surely, it was not so meant. According to Pilate's intention that superscription was a word of scorn and insult.

But so it is every time in this holy drama. Caiaphas speaks of "one who must die for all the people", and Pilate writes: "The King of the Jews"; and in these thoughtless words of Caiaphas and Pilate, God declares, as by His unwilling instruments, His holy mystery.

So stood the contrast with respect to Rome's emperor; but it was different in the Messianic sense.

"The Jews" means something altogether different from "Israel".

"Israel" is the holy name, given of God Himself, to the people that sprang from Abraham. They only began to be called "Jews", when their honor had been lost, when foreigners ruled over them, when

the state as ordered by Moses had been vanquished, when their spiritual ideal was darkened, and when they placed their highest expectation in the coming of an earthly Messiah, who would establish for them again a realm of earthly glory. Thus Herod, the son of Edom, had been the king of *the Jews.*

But such the Messiah of the Psalmist, the Messiah of the prophets is not. He should be the rod come forth from the stem of Jesse, the King of Israel.

Between the Sanhedrin and Jesus the point of contrast lay not between *King* and *Emperor,* but between King of *the Jews* and King of *Israel.*

Thus understood, that inscription above the cross was a vituperation. The name of the *false* Messiah was placed above the cross of the Messiah, Who had been anointed of God over Zion.

The language of self-deception.

Of blindness to the realm of God, the Kingdom of heaven; of openness of eye and ear to the restoration of the bastardized, and from its origin alienated *Jewish state.*

So, what was intended by Pilate as an insult to Jesus, became an insult to the Jewish national pride.

That superscription roused the anger of the Jews.

As it now read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews", it was the Emperor, who played his mocking game with the expectant Jews. And therefore they said: Take away what stands written, and write, that Jesus has set Himself up as King of the Jews.

In this vexation of Jewish impotence the proud Governor took delight. He would not change it. It would remain as it was. The Jews had troubled him about this Jesus. And now he took pleasure in

mocking these turbulent and irritable Jews in their powerlessness.

With that pretence of the Jews, of having a King of their own, it must be ended once and for all.

That then was their King; *a King on the cross!*

Every one of us, standing at the cross, would probably have enjoyed it too.

Victim of the cruel, fanatical Jewish hatred, it might easily have been a satisfaction to every one else, to see those bitter persecuting Jews caught in the snare of their own fanaticism.

But your faith, your love is your safeguard. Even the rise of such a feeling was utterly unthinkable in Christ; in Him, Who dying, still prayed for His embittered enemies.

He Who wept over Jerusalem, because it would not let itself be gathered together under the wings of His Love, even while dying on the cross still struggled with His love for His people, that in Him and His cross had rejected the Messiah of the fathers.

More still, as He looked on the cross, in process of erection, He felt the scorn of the superscription above it more deeply than any high priest.

It was the revilement of His Israel by the Roman tyrant. It was the revilement of the Messiah anointed of God by Israel that in Jewish fanaticism had become corrupt.

No, those Jews would have no more King. Ejected from their state they would wander about as exiles, century upon century, among the nations, and only in the dream of the Chiliasts would the unholy idea of a King of the Jews still keep itself alive.

Dying on the cross Jesus saw and foresaw and understood the shameful decline of His Israel, that committed its national crime on Him.

For one who loved Israel, such as Jesus alone could love, this was a new bitter draught from the cup, which the Father put into His hand.

But through and beyond the death of Israel, Jesus, dying on His cross, saw the birth, the development, the once surely coming triumph of the "Kingdom of heaven".

And in that Kingdom His would be the crown of honor; handed to Him by the Father Himself.

XXVIII.

THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF

AS LONG as we continue our pilgrim journey on earth, "Christ and Him Crucified", is the sacred parole, the watchword full of mystery, the word of the ages, that inspires us.

Our creed is not a defence of an abstract truth, no propaganda of a barren system, no witness from our lips, to win partisans for ideas and representations; but it is the fruit of *faith*, of faith in a spiritual reality, which, embodied in a whole series of striking events, appears before us as a world by itself full of light and love and life, and of which sacred story Christ is the one and only center.

We are *Christians*. Thus what distinguishes us, is not that we believe in God, for Melchizedek too did this; but what marks us is our holy Baptism; and that Baptism is administered unto us in Christ's name, that as His purchased ones we should confess the Triune God.

Christ, and He alone, makes separation between us and those who are not Christians.

And Christ makes division between them and us, but not as Mahomet distinguished between Mussulmen and those who are called "unbelievers". Hence it is not because in Him we honor the founder of our religion, nor yet because we hold ourselves to His institutions and make His doctrine our own; but because a mystical, mysterious tie binds us to Christ and unites us with Him in *one* body.

The holy apostles do not glory, that they are of Christ, because they hold what He commanded, and

direct their lives by His oracles, but because they could confess: "I live; *yet no more I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Gal. 2: 20, Dutch version); in other words because they could glory: He is our Vine, and *in Him we are as branches,* bearing fruit from what that Vine is to His branches.

They truly never put the Christ before the Father, but yet they can not go to the Father except *through Him.*

Christ is their Head and King, their Mediator and Avenger, their Prophet and their sympathizing High Priest.

From Him, as the only center, flows all light that shines out towards them, and towards Him radiates back all higher utterance of life from their heart.

There is no name known under heaven, which to the mind of the apostles excels the name of Christ.

And therefore, "Christ and Him crucified" is the sum total of their faith, the summary of their preaching, the beautiful interpretation of what hope quickens in their heart.

That "crucified" must be added to it; for in that Christ is *crucified,* lies all the tragic-mysteriousness, the tender charm, the soul-touching and heart-captivating power of their preaching.

The disciples, already before Jesus suffered and died, truly followed after Him; joined themselves to Him; loved Him, and were ready to give their lives for Him; but yet only after Golgotha do the scales fall from their eyes, is the veil removed that hid His *real* greatness from them, and now in retrospect they see a glory become manifest in Him, such as before they had but faintly surmised.

For though they knew before, that He was going

to suffer, they still prayed against it, they wanted to prevent it, and could not enter into the thought, that so shameful a death was to come upon Him.

First the suffering had to be there, that suffering had to be endured and fought out to the finish, and only when they faced the fruit, the rich result, the spiritual effect of that suffering, did they perceive the gold that glistened in it, the Divine majesty that lay ensconsed in it, and how only by the *cross* Christ had truly become the Anointed God, the Object of their worship.

They had thought, that the cross would eclipse the greatness of Jesus. And behold, now that it is past, their eyes open to the fact, that only by the cross is their Savior become great above all else.

Now it is not: Christ Who, alas, has died on the cross, but—Christ without the cross has *passed away* from them, and Christ *with* His cross is become to them the Christ *in His glory.*

And therefore: "Christ and Him crucified"; so from that hour on resounds the language of their glorying.

And it is *this* language of glorying which has gone out into the world; which has resounded through the ages; and which as a note of victory and triumph has also reached the ear of our soul.

It was the "sacrifice of Himself" in which lay the mystery of redeeming, sanctifying power, and which interprets to us the wondrous power of the cross of Golgotha.

Selfsacrifice the world also had known *before* the cross. Among all nations heroic courage had shone forth, which for the sake of native land threw

itself upon death, or in the devotion of love deemed not life itself too costly a price.

However deep by sin our human nature had sunk, so many a spark of nobler sense still glistened, thanks to common grace, in the breast of the nobility of our race, that among all nations traditions abound with instances of heroic courage and of consecration that spares nothing.

In the quiet retirement of the home there were such notable instances of the same beautiful trait of devotion on the part of wife and mother.

To save his master even a slave sometimes braved death.

All this however was not yet "self-sacrifice".

This no one of us, no child of man born in sin, could bring; for that "self-sacrifice" must be brought to the altar of God, and on that altar of God nothing can come, that is stained, maimed or impure.

Not the braving of death stamped this surrender of self as a *sacrifice*. That *sacrifice* received its stamp only by the completeness of devotion to Him, from Whom is our life and our whole existence, and to Whom therefore to all eternity our whole existence belongs.

That that "self-sacrifice" goes through death, is even incidental. In paradise that self-sacrifice would have remained free from any touch of death, if, by forsaking it himself, the *first* Adam had not laid that "self-sacrifice" upon the *second* Adam.

With the angels of God there is "self-sacrifice", for they know no other aim, than to give themselves to God, to devote themselves to God, and to live for God.

So would "self-sacrifice" have glistened among

men, had not sin polluted the *offering,* and made "sacrifice" impossible on the part of men.

To be able to offer yourself unto God you must first be pure, your garment must be white as snow and your robe as white wool.

Then, and only then, can your life be a "self-sacrifice" unto God.

Otherwise not.

One single defect, the least spot or wrinkle, makes your person altogether unfit to be an offering to God.

He who, "polluted, covered with guilt and deformed by a thousand sins", offers himself at the altar of God, is inexorably, irrevocably dismissed.

God tolerates nothing but what is spotless and unpunishably clean, upon His holy altar.

And therefore neither you, nor any other man, could bring the *self-sacrifice,* and consequently it had never before been brought, and never would have been brought, if Jesus the Holy One had not appeared.

"Conceived by the Holy Ghost", and therefore "separate from sinners", that is His honorary title, the only honorary title by which Jesus became enabled to offer up that still unknown, ever demanded, but never brought "self-sacrifice" unto God.

When *He* appeared at the altar of God, He was not turned away; for He was pure.

Pure, not alone when men tested Him, but also when He was tested by the holy eye of His God.

However much tried like gold, there appeared of Him nothing, save what in holiness was equal to the very fine gold of Ophir.

Had it now been for His own sake alone, that He

appeared, then Jesus also, even as the angels of God in heaven, would have brought His *self-sacrifice* in His life on earth, and by His life alone.

That death was added thereto, was by our doing, and for our sake.

It is because of our guilt, it is for our sins, that this offering of perfect consecration to God, this self-sacrifice, had to be sealed *by His blood.*

For Jesus had no fellowship with death save for our sakes.

Death is from sin, and as our Savior stood outside of sin, so also did He stand outside of all death and over against all death. And only when He took *our sin* upon Himself, did He, as aftermath of that sin, also draw our terrible death upon Himself.

So has His "self-sacrifice" become *our* offering; and he who by faith may lose himself in that cross, sink away in that cross, be altogether wrapped up in the cross, he when Christ died has died in and with Him, and *he* has made a perfect offering, when in that self-sacrifice of Christ he has also presented himself to God.

Wondrous mystery!

And more wondrous still, that this self-sacrifice of Christ, even while you yet retain your spots and your defilements, places you pure and spotless before your God, so that, reconciled in Christ, justified in Christ, and sanctified in Christ, according to the holy word of the apostle, you can likewise present *yourself as a holy offering well pleasing unto a holy God.*

Your "self-sacrifice" as fruit of the *self-sacrifice* of your Savior.

XXIX.

MY GARMENTS

BEFORE Jesus was nailed to the cross, they had first taken off His garments.

This shame the Lord has felt very keenly.

He had felt this already in anticipation, before yet He had come in the flesh. Already from David's lips He sang by the Holy Ghost: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture!" (Ps. 22:18).

For long centuries, before it came to it, Jesus has tasted in advance the disgrace in all its bitterness, which with this removal of the clothes from His body would overtake Him, the Lord of glory.

To take off one's garments himself in the sacred privilege of seclusion and of the privacy of the home, even for the poorest upon earth. But to see one's garments taken off with violence *by others*; to have one's clothes publicly removed in the street; not alone the upper garment, but all your garments; till finally the nude body appears and every curious eye can stare at the most hidden parts of your tenderer life, has been the disgrace of condemned malefactors in all ages, but never has any criminal suffered so terribly under this shame as the holy Jesus.

That plaintive moan: They have taken off my garments! was already in the psalm the bitter anxious cry, as though Immanuel supplicated, that it might not come to this extremity.

Also strip before all eyes my clothes from off my body! O, Father, if this cup might pass; except I drink it.

In garments lies man's modesty, the venerableness of his self-perception. Before a little one is born, his little dress lies waiting for him, and when man dies, he yet goes with his garment into the grave.

Alone the little child Jesus awaited no garment at His coming into the world. He was "wrapped in *swaddling clothes*". And when He was carried out to the grave they "wrapped Him *in a clean linen cloth,* with the spices", and thus they laid Him away in Joseph's garden.

But also in the days of His sojourn on earth Jesus was seen in human garments, and His garment was so closely and tenderly wrapped up with His body and thereby with His person, that virtue went out from the hem of it, when touched by that poor sick woman, who though for shame she dared not speak, yet believed.

Also when He was transfigured on the mount, His robe did not fall from His shoulders, but His raiment shared in the indescribable glory that shone out from Him and with which He was drenched; for as we read: "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9:3).

And when finally He ascended up to heaven, we do not read, that in ascending His raiment fell off from Him, but in those, meanwhile certainly vanishing garments, He went up into the heaven of heavens.

Three times we read that Jesus laid aside His garment.

The first time of His own accord at the footwashing, when He laid aside His garments, and in the form of a slave went in among His disciples. It was

in the form of a slave, for a slave had no honor, and therefore went bare-headed and naked down to the waist. The modesty, the venerableness of the human was only for the free!

The second time His garment was taken off by Herod, when his soldiers made a rough-shod mockery of Jesus, and in wilful presumptuousness and with blasphemous contempt they played king with Him.

Then, however, He received His garment back again. The red mantel was taken off from Him, and in His own raiment again the Lord Jesus has stood trial before Pilate.

But the third time His garments were taken from Him for good, and were declared at a good price by the executioners. And when the cross was ready, and they took hold of Jesus, to nail Him, our precious Savior, to it, the ruffian hand touched Him first at His upper garment; drew it off; and after that also took His other garments from His body; and in the shame of nudity have they lifted up the Savior, and so before the eyes of all have they nailed Him to His cross.

One reads so easily about this seemingly trifling incident. And yet there lies in it such an incomprehensible depth of sorrow and of shame for Him, Who for our sakes has suffered it.

That once we shall not be found naked, but clothed upon, or, as in the Revelations of Patmos, that once in the new Jerusalem the fine white raiment should be given us, did Jesus allow Himself to be stripped naked, and His garments to be divided among His executioners, not after His death, but while still living He hung on the cross and saw it!

O, that human raiment has so much to say to us!

God Himself put the first garment on His human children, when in Paradise with "coats of skins" He covered the nakedness, which had become the cause of shame to the heart lapsed into sin.

Gratefully man wore that garment, as long as sin did not get too bitterly the upper hand.

But when sin exercised its power and wine heated the man, Noah casts his clothes aside, and lies down to sleep naked before the eye of his children. And then Ham mocks. But Shem and Japhet pick up the garment of their father and cover his nakedness.

When presently the high priest appears, his garment is the sign of his sacred office, and hence he must change his garments on the day of Atonement.

"Still life" is what art calls a garment that is found in an unlooked-for place, and as it lies there, betrays that with the man whose garment it is, something must have happened. And so Jacob weeps in despair, when the coat of Joseph sprinkled with blood is brought him, and Potiphar kindles into towering rage, when he finds Joseph's garment on the bed of his wife.

That raiment is a part of man's personality.

When from Bozra one comes "with dyed garments and blood on his apparel", the blood stain on the garment shows how strenuously and how terribly that lone combatant has fought, before he overcame.

When Elijah goes up into heaven, his prophet-mantle falls down upon Elisha, and to him it is the symbol of the descent of two parts of Elijah's spirit upon the prophet of the Lord.

He who is bereaved clothes himself in sackcloth; for the glad glistens the apparel of praise.

There are garments of salvation, which are put on the redeemed.

And so by Jesus, in His suffering, our clothing also is sanctified.

Sanctified, that man should hold high the modesty of his dress. Sanctified, that in vanity he should not make dress a sin. Sanctified also as a symbol of that white garment of righteousness, that shall be put about him, who altogether leprous knows what it is to be *naked.*

XXX.

THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO

THE SIN that was committed on Golgotha against the Christ of God, is not merely *a* sin, but *the* sin; sin in all the fulness of *consummation* and *absoluteness.*

Further than this, sin could not and can not go. Deeper it can not penetrate. More wickedly it can not oppose the living God. More boldly, more recklessly, in a sense more devilishly, it can neither outrage God's majesty nor wound God's love.

Many cruelties have been perpetrated in the earth, which have borne a more gruesome character; in which the ingenuity of human cruelty has exhibited itself more strongly; in which simultaneously all sorts of sins of voluptuousness, selfishness, revengefulness, murderousness, and what not have broken out; atrocities at which still altogether worse than on Golgotha human blood has flowed, and the cries of human death-horrors have been heard, but this more *terrible* character only belongs to all such dreadful acts when you count with the standard of the feeling.

But when you take your standard *spiritually;* when you understand David's confessson: "Against Thee, yea, *against Thee only* have I sinned"; and consequently you confess, that a sin is more shameful, more cruel and more terrible, in the measure in which it more directly *opposes the living God,* then all those other bloody atrocities recede altogether into the background; and there simply has not been committed one sin on the earth, nor ever can be

perpetrated by man, which is comparable even from a distance, with the sin, that has been sinned against Jesus on Golgotha; the fall in Paradise excepted.

The superficial man does not understand this.

When Adam eats of the forbidden tree, and Cain murders his brother Abel, the unspiritually-minded man thinks, that the murder of Abel was a far more dreadful sin, than the eating of the forbidden tree.

But he who has lent a listening ear to the Word of God, knows better.

For Cain's crime is truly dreadful, and Abel's blood keeps calling unto God; but yet, not by the murder of Abel, but by the eating of the forbidden fruit, a whole world is sunken away in guilt and condemnation before God.

And so also it is here.

The judicial murder by Herod of John Baptist, and that bleeding head of the man of God carried on a silver salver into Herod's banqueting hall, makes a more repulsive impression than the cross of Golgotha.

And yet, of the murder of John, God's Word scarcely takes further notice, while on Golgotha's account presently Israel is cast away by God, city and temple destroyed, and at last Rome's emperorship, that in Pilate stood accessory, is overrun by Barbarians and brought to nought.

The balance with which the world, and the balance with which God the Lord weighs *sin,* is altogether different.

The question is, whether, as you put sin into one scale, you put into the other the *honor of men* or the name *of your God.*

Hence it can not be otherwise than that judgment on *sin* and *sin* must altogether diverge.

Also on Golgotha.

Jesus knew that the sin that was committed on Him was the most grievous, the most heinous, the most damnable sin.

They on the other hand who committed it, or who witnessed it, could scarcely imagine, that there was sin in it.

The spiritually blinded did not know, they did not understand, nor did they realize, *what they did,* when they put the Mediator between God and man to the cross.

Therefore they could not themselves pray that God might forgive them.

And because they could not do this for themselves, Jesus prayed this for them:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Have you made this also a matter of thought?

Has your soul, in its love for your Savior, entered into what this had to be to Him? Himself alone to understand the outrage committed upon Him, and to be obliged to shut up the knowledge of this all else surpassing sin in His own troubled mind?

Through all the centuries, from Paradise, sin had been bent upon, had lusted, once to make a show of its *entire* godlessness, its grossest unholiness, its most perfect, devilish nature.

And the world was full of cruelty and horror.

One misdeed overtook the other to surpass it and to place it in the shade.

And yet, however inhuman, beastly and devilishly sin had broken out and broken through among the peoples and the nations, it had never been able to offer a sample of its absolute godlessness.

Ever yet the fever of the passion of sin had burned on.

Ever yet did it plan upon more; took higher aim; was intent upon still unholier revelation of its demoniac nature.

And now, at last, it will come to its most awful utterance, to that deed of naked, clear, radical and direct enmity against God and against His Anointed.

Further it can not go.

Here, upon Golgotha it stretches itself out in the fulness of its evil power; appears in its gigantic wickedness and meanness.

It does what it had never done: *in Jesus* it assaults God Himself.

It comes out in a dreadfulness, which imparts a meaning to the history of the whole world; which brings doom to Israel and Jerusalem; and to all those who join themselves to it, lets eternal damnation become irrevocable.

And .... of all this no one observes anything. The Sanhedrin has not the faintest glimpse of this. Of this Pilate has no distant thought. This does not enter the heart of the multitudes. Not even a Peter or a John understand a half of this.

Jesus alone knows and feels this. He upon Whom the sorrow comes, and against Whom sin commits itself in its finished completeness.

Yea, so forcibly does this awful knowledge press upon Him alone, that disclosure of His heart even to the best of His disciples is unthinkable.

They are dull-brained as a dove. They hear His words, but do not understand Him.

And so to all the dreadfulness of His suffering, this awfulness was added also, that no one saw the horror, save He. And He alone saw it to the full.

And it is this anguish of soul that went forth, when in prayer to His God He exclaimed: *"Father, they know not what they do."*

Does Jesus' prayer in behalf of these madmen at His cross mean, that their ignorance excused them, and that on this ground Jesus prayed, that their sin might not be laid up against them?

Let not he who might think this forget, that here we stand on Golgotha; that this is holy ground; and that it is not expedient for him to tread this holy ground, so long as he has not loosed the latchet of his spiritless superficiality.

For how?

It should be no sin, because it was done in ignorance? Wherefore then, if it were no sin, this prayer for forgivenness?

Have you forgotten what the Psalmist sang: "Lord, cleanse thou me from secret faulths" (19:12)? Forgotten what Jesus said, that he that knew not the will of his Lord, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes (Luke 12:48)? Forgotten also what the apostle says: "If our heart condemn us not, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 Jo. 3:20)?

Hide yourself in the tent of the world with so nonsensical an idea, as though sin done in ignorance were *no* sin, but do not enter with this into the tent of the Lord. With so sinful a judgment of sin stay away at least from the one and only Golgotha.

No, whether anything is sin, does not depend upon your knowledge, but solely on this: whether it opposes God; and although ill will and consciousness aggravate the guilt, yet the first, the predominant, the all judgment-explaining standard is

and always will be, the degree of godlessness with which your word or your deed opposes the Holy God.

Jesus' prayer: *Father, forgive them,* a prayer, which even as every prayer of Jesus, has very surely been heard, can have no other sense, and no other meaning, than that to that Caiaphas, to that Herod, to that Pilate, to those soldiers, to those priests, to the persons in that wild mob about His cross, there might not be imputed *personally* that most awful of guilts, implied in the murder of the Anointed of God.

That it was these *persons* who did it, was purely incidental.

Had you been high priest in Caiaphas' place, had I sat in Pilate's judgment seat, had our third man been tetrarch of Galilee, had our children and servants stood about the cross, we all *together would have done wholly the same* what now these unfortunates did.

It was sin, which we all have cherished, that used these persons merely as its instruments.

And therefore these instruments are of secondary count. That they lived just *then.* Occupied those posts of honor just then. Lived in Jerusalem just then. And from curiosity ran out to Golgotha. All this was incidental.

That which on Golgotha exhibited its unholy sense, and committed the atrocity, was the *sin of mankind.*

And therefore Jesus prays for them, that this incident might not aggravate *their* judgment forever.

Even as it will eternally shadow our judgment, unless we convert ourselves, so shall it also shadow their judgment.

Nothing less, but also nothing more, for that *more,* Jesus has prayed away for them.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And then there still are children of God, who count with their conscious sins alone, and who, because of the dullness of their heart have no percepton of any other sins, are scarcely aware of the need of prayer for forgiveness of guilt.

As though what Jesus then prayed, should not have included us.

Sins which we know and have confessed, but also, and much more yet, mountains of sins, that stand to our account, and of which we have no faint perception.

And therefore it is so blessedly comforting, that there is One Who liveth to pray also for us.

To pray also for us, that calm prayer of Golgotha: Father, forgive my redeemed ones, *for they know not what they do!*

XXXI.

WITH ME IN PARADISE

THE INTERLUDE ON GOLGOTHA of the "murderer on the cross", still retains its striking significance among all such as live by faith.

Even symbolically the portrayal of the Evangelist is so rich. He, the Prince of life, in the midst, and on either side of Him a guilty child of man, at the point of death, the one to die away in endless misery, the other with the halo of the crown of glory already glistening around his guilty head. And those two malefactors as well as Messiah Himself, the spotless, pure One, lifted up on the accursed tree. And He together *with* two sinners, but more still *for* sinners, presently giving up the ghost on a cross of shame.

This is not merely symbolic beauty, because of the contrast. For by itself a contrast kindles concern and artificial contrast is cruel. But this is a God-glorifying beauty, because here the contrast springs from real life, exhibits to us the mighty antithesis of sin and holiness, of faith and unbelief, of life and death drawn together as in one central point; and after having thus shown you this contrast of unfathomable deep reality, dissolves it in atonement; in that atonement prophecies the triumph of what is holy to you; and presents to you that result consecrated unto God, which, contrary to everything that is here before your eyes, can be conjectured, and be understood by the eye of faith alone.

These two crosses alongside Jesus' cross are not there for the sake of symmetry. They have not been

added there to make a show. Because one cross would have stood there so naked and so bald.

The watch charged with the execution, did nothing out of the ordinary, when, to save needless trouble, they brought several condemned criminals to execution together. These two malefactors who had been sentenced for murder had to be put to death. So, at this time there were three executions at once.

There need be no thought of intention on the part of Pilate, purposely to offend Jesus by such undesired company. Of a Caiaphas this might have been expected. Not of a Roman; and far less of Pilate, who, weak of character though he was, had unwillingly delivered this victim of Jewish religious hatred to be crucified.

But there was intention there.

Not on the part of Pilate, but of Satan.

"Numbered with the transgressors" had already been previsioned in Isaiah's prophecy, as an aggravation of the suffering, that should come upon the Messiah.

And indeed, Satan and his angels revelled with ghoulish glee in the idea, of accompanying Jesus in His dying with two murderers, and though the Sanhedrin did not surmise the plan, you may be sure, that their madness took pleasure in it.

But in this intention Satan again was nothing but an *instrument in the hand of God.* A saw, to speak in the style of Isaiah, which God drew, an ax wherewith God hewed, not to wound His dear Son still more deeply, but to cast down all highness of man, and to exhibit the more gloriously in this the great-

ness of the soul of Messiah and the wondrous power of faith.

For could humanity have been represented more pitifully, more wretchedly, than it was on Golgotha, in that mighty historic moment, in which the lot of mankind hung in the balance.

Of every creature in heaven and on earth man was the richest, man the highest creature, called to present the whole world as an offering to God.

And what is the form in which this humanity here appears? A judge who violates the right; soldiers who stain themselves with the blood of a judicial murder; spiritual leaders of the people who lose all self-control in passion and revenge; a mob that howls and rants when it sees the Man Who healed all diseases, cruelly ill-treated; and left and right of the accursed tree on which Jesus hangs, two children of men, each on a cross of his own, as living proofs that in murder committed on men, the sin of the human heart seeks its own consummation.

Think Mary and John away, in whom not brightness of their own, but reflection of Jesus glistened, and in all this human appearance on Golgotha there is not one point of light. The darkness that presently enswathed the cross, was but expression of the darkness that here *spiritually* bare rule.

As night in nature, and nothing but black night in the human heart, human evil is as it were symbolized in those two murderers, who with their crosses formed the frame, in which Jesus' cross was set.

And into this darkness breaks forth all the light of Jesus.

Deeply, this could not be otherwise, Jesus must have felt the insult, that even in His death they

forced such companions in misery upon Him. To see that murderer on His left and that murderer on His right side, must to His perception have been a sacrilege, put to Him in that dreadful hour. Even reverence for His dying was here withheld.

And yet Jesus takes no offence. He does not despise those objectionable forms that writhe in pain upon their cross. And even when one of these two in the midst of his death struggle still misuses his voice, hoarse from feverish thirst, to mock the King of glory, no word passes Jesus' lips, to curse him.

This too tolerates, this too endures, this too undergoes your Savior.

And open His lips to address His fellows on the cross, He only does, when that other murderer had made the *language of faith* to be heard.

Here also it is the Son of man Who is come not to judge, but to save.

And when He speaks, no malediction for the reckless mocker passes across His lips, but a benediction, a prophecy of salvation for him who in his dying still looked up to the Messiah.

"*This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!*"

Language of Divine highness, for while the world casts Him out, and His breath shortens in the throat, and He is accursed in the eyes of all, He still speaks as the King of the realm of God, Who has the blessednesses of heaven to give away.

Giving way under His sorrows of death, He sees Paradise opened, where His soul shall presently and joyfully enter.

While His battle-worn soul enjoys that foretaste of eternal gladness, love, a love that embraces even the murderer, remains the breath of His heart.

And as with an oath, as though to make the unbelievable real, He says to him: "Verily, verily I say unto you, yet this day you shall be with me in Paradise."

Not yet in the realm of glory. That can only be ushered in after the judgment. But in Paradise, i. e. in the provisional state of happiness, in which the separated souls await the day of Jesus' glory. In that provisional, that heavenly Jerusalem which John saw, in the day of Jesus' glory coming down from God out of heaven to earth (Rev. 21: 2).

So man here exhibits himself, in a manner that makes you turn repugnantly away from him. With all the splendor of the Roman uniforms, with all the grandeur of Rome's choice jurisprudence, with all the sacredness of the habited priest, with all the excellence of Israel's high calling, all that you can call your own, O, race of man, here you are despicable, fallen away from your high estate, base and evil.

And over against this Jesus, Whom ye cast out, is also here so great. Not to the outward eye, for He hangs on the accursed tree. In shrill contrast with your tabards and uniforms He hangs here naked and unclothed. You are possessed of might and fame, while He struggles with death that is already astir in His veins. But still great; great in His high perception, that He has Paradise to give away; great by the still resignedness with which He suffers Himself to be numbered with transgressors; greater still by the compassion of His soul, with which He blesses the penitent malefactor, comforts him, and endues him with grace.

And while thus over against the dark shadow of

human lightheartedness the greatness of soul in Jesus shows itself by contrast, now see, how here no less in an altogether wonderful manner shines out the all conquering *power of faith.*

You need not make it more wonderful than it is. There is no reason not to accept, that that murderer on the cross had heard of Jesus before. He may have been among the four thousand or among the five thousand whom at the lake of Genesareth Jesus had fed with the wondrous bread. Very possible, that more than once he had heard silver speech from Jesus' lips. Perhaps he had also witnessed His wondrous healings.

But however this may be, afterward he had gone the evil way. He had not sought the paths of light, but of darkness. He had not drunk from Jesus' love, but from Satan's lust of murder. And in the end he had not shrunk back from the shedding of man's blood.

Since then, he had been thrown into prison, and had not seen or heard anything, of what had taken place with Jesus at Jerusalem.

And now he is put to the cross, and he sees another cross alongside of his, and in that crossling who there hangs beside him, he recognizes the Rabbi of former days.

And now he sees Jesus, not in glory, but despised, sentenced and condemned, and dying like he himself must die.

And see, while like a Peter has even denied Jesus, and the disciples have fled, and it is as though His most faithful friends dare not to come out for Him, now in that dying murderer kindles the courage of faith, the power of faith, the grace of faith, to honor Him Who hangs there on the accursed wood, and

despite the Sanhedrin, to worship Him as his Savior, as his deliverer, as the King in the Kingdom of God. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" (Luke 23: 42).

Of Peter nothing is seen. Thomas sank away in his doubt. The pious stand afar off and are silent.

A murderer is the only one who in that hour of darkness dared to call upon Jesus.

Was then that murderer better than Peter, more noble than John, more courageous than Thomas? Of course not. To think this were to subvert all the history of the Gospel.

No, what shone out in that murderer was the *power of God.*

The wondrous power of God whereby God Almighty can kindle faith in the soul.

It was God who in this dreadful moment came in the faith-language of that murderer to comfort His dear Son.

God, Who in this touching and striking scene of Golgotha calls out to all the world; Believe, believe like that murderer in the Man of Sorrows, and in your dying, you too awaits Paradise!

XXXII.

DRIED UP LIKE A POTSHERD

FOR US God's dear Son has suffered. He has not merely suffered *something* for us, that we might go out free. But He has suffered what we should have had to suffer. So He suffered in *our stead.*

And this makes all the difference.

When you say: "The Lord Jesus Christ endured suffering, to redeem millions of people from eternal corruption"—then it is your heart that thinks, and correctly so: "There is really nothing wondrous in this; for what noble-minded man would not be willing to suffer, if thereby he could save millions of people!"

So you find the dying of your Savior truly heroic, truly beautiful, truly self-sacrificing; but ..... and herein lurks the danger ... upon careful consideration, you do not find it greater than many other instances of self-sacrifice that have often been achieved, even to save one single person!

This should not be held back, but expressed. For by nothing so much as by this untrue preaching of the cross, is the value of that divine cross underestimated and brought to nought.

No, to understand Golgotha, you together with all God's elect, of the past, of the present and those that shall come after, must take your stand in thought at the foot of the cross, and ask yourself: "What should I have had to suffer eternally, if I should have had to bear myself the righteous retribution for all my sins and my godlessness." And when you have carefully thought this out and in your

soul have realized something of what giving way eternally under the dreadful wrath of God means, and then look round about you, upon these other children of God, one by one, and ask what this one, and that one and the other, eternally should have had to drink of the wine of God's wrath, if there had no atonement been found. And if then in your thought, to your perception, in a measure even in your imagination you put, if you can, all that eternal nameless suffering together to form an unmeasured ocean of awful depression of soul and death anguish, —then perhaps you will be able to understand something, one drop in the bucket, of the unspeakably deep suffering of death, in which Jesus went under, when He was laid into the dust of death.

For that suffering He bore.

Of that ocean of nameless sorrow no drop has been spared Him.

That was the cup, about which in Gethsemane He supplicated: "Father! might it pass, except I drink it!"

All that would have been poured out upon us eternally, is poured out *upon Him.*

So alone you understand Golgotha!

The Holy Spirit uses a touching figure of speech, to make us sense this in some measure, when He speaks of Christ *in the strength of His life as being dried up like a potsherd.*

What does this image imply?

You stand before an oven, in which by great heat from soft clay hard pottery is burned.

To this end that oven is heated to the scorching point, till at length everything that comes into it

scorches and shrinks and expels its latest particle of moisture.

And now the clay pitcher is brought, which artistically formed, in its grey clay tint, is moist and therefore soft. And now it goes into the oven. There singeing heat attacks that clay pitcher, draws every particle of moisture from it, scorches it grey and red, and burns it, till it is hard like granite.

Till at length the heat finishes its task, and the clay pitcher becomes a stone pitcher, and then it must be taken out, lest it should burst.

But see, sometimes there springs and slivers a *sherd* from such a vessel, and that potsherd falls on the hot flooring of the oven, and remains lying there.

When the pitcher has become hard, it is taken from the oven, *but not the potsherd.*

No, about that potsherd no one cares. It remains lying there. And when to-morrow the oven is put to use again, that potsherd must again pass through the heat. And the day that follows after it undergoes another heating. Yea, as often as a clay vessel must be hardened, the neglected potsherd always glows and burns too.

And therefore says the Holy Ghost, that the suffering of Messiah was *as the burning of a potsherd;* for in that one suffering of Christ was the heat of the burning of God's wrath against all His elect.

O, Cross of Golgotha, into what depth of self-mortification dost thou cast down even the best of God's children.

The wrath of God at one single sin we can hardly imagine; at some point we stop, because we can not

think further into the fermenting and the seething of that anger in our own breast.

What then must be "the eternal punishment both in soul and body"?

Eternal misery, it can not be thought into, let alone, lived into.

A fire that is *never* quenched. A worm that *never* dies. Outermost darkness, in which the dreary silence is broken by nothing save the weeping of the lost and the gnashing of teeth on the part of unconverted godlessness.

O, one wills no more hear of *a hell.* And for long years that dreadful word has been fenced with far too thoughtlessly. But that *hell* is still there. And it is so dreadful, so indescribably terrible. Doomed for an eternity. And no single drop of water even, which a compassionate heart might bring us at the tip of one's fingers, to cool our tongue.

And now, that eternal death, that eternal doom, that hell our Surety and Mediator has drunk to the dregs.

Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani! was the cry from His tortured soul, and there was no compassion, and no compassion was *permitted.*

Had the Mediator then been taken compassion upon, compassion could never have been taken upon us.

People of God, do you live *at* that cross?

Do you let that cross enter deeply into your soul, deep into your reins and inner parts, to make you sense the dreadfulness of an unrighteous existence, upon which such wrath went forth, and which by such an offering alone could be atoned?

We go again through the passion weeks.

Easter again is approaching.

Oh, that you might be convinced again more deeply than before of your doomworthiness and guilt before the Holy One of Israel.

Then, then alone, you come again to conversion; then alone you come in your own person to your Surety; then alone is there a Golgotha, is there a Cross for you!

A Cross, and at the foot of that Cross a Fountain which is opened also for *your* unrighteousness and for *your* sin!

XXXIII.

I AM POURED OUT LIKE WATER

FROM the Old Testament we learn what the New withholds, to wit: the inward condition of Jesus' mind and heart during the increase of anguish in His death struggle.

The Evangelists truly tell us what Jesus cried out from the cross; but not what lay back of that cry; not from where that call, that anxious cry was born.

This they could not do. Nothing was seen of this; this could not be overheard; and to add anything fanciful to it, they had too much reverence for the suffering of their Lord.

But there was no need of this, for it had already been recorded.

The Messiah Himself by the Holy Ghost already had described most touchingly, with bold outline, in striking language, the inner enervation of His strength of soul. He was *not* like one of us. He had not taken that suffering upon Himself, without knowing what it implied. He had not faced the cross, half ignorant of what it really would be, so that, when He came to it, He was half confused by the dreadfulness of this anguish. No, that would have been unworthy of His Divine Majesty. He, the Son, took nothing upon Himself, save what He had beforehand fathomed in all its depth, had measured in all its compass, yea, had beforehand lived through and *suffered through* in every particular.

And from that living-through and suffering-through in the spirit flowed the soul-stirring complaint, which in Psalm twenty-two the Holy Spirit

had drawn from David's lips, when on the mountains of Judah he began the heart-rending lamentation of: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, being so far distant from helping me, from the voice of my roaring!"

Thus, would you know, what Jesus inwardly, has lived through beforehand, and has finally endured on the cross, then do not rest content with the Gospels, but turn back to Isaiah fifty-three and to Psalm twenty-two. Why, oh, why is there no place given to those deep passion-songs in passion-preaching?

One of the features, which we catch from the passion-psalm is Jesus' inward faintness, prostration and exhaustion. The Holy Spirit portrays it as before our eyes in vss. 15 and 16, and He does it in a number of images, in an overwhelming abundance of thoughts, as though to make you realize, how incapable language is, to describe the utmost inward succumbency of the Messiah.

While alive the Lord feels as though He were already buried, for He moans: *"Thou layest me in the dust of death";* His soul can not voice its sorrows in complaint, for *"His tongue cleaveth to His jaws"*; His tears refuse to flow, for He feels Himself *"dried up as a potsherd";* His heart can offer no more resistance, because *"His heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of His bowels";* His body is completely powerless and to His feeling it is as though fallen apart, for *"all His bones are separated one from the other";* yea, in brief, our Savior feels His whole existence inwardly succumb and collapse, for He mourns: "I AM POURED OUT LIKE WATER!"

Where now are the people, who say that Jesus died like a *martyr?*

How dies a *martyr?*

Is it not by grace! By in-poured strength which fills his fainting heart with *heroic courage!* By the energy of faith, which till the latest death-sob keeps him strong and unmovable within, though everything without is consumed!

And what of this do you find with Jesus?

Of this everything the contrary!

No grace; for He is forsaken of God. *No* in-poured strength, for all the strength that was in Him, is as it were sucked out of Him and drop by drop drawn from Him. No heroism, for it was all one succumbency within, before it came to the succumbency without.

Jesus was inwardly not *strengthened* but *broken down.*

With respect to the rapidity and the awfulness of that inward exhaustion, "broken down" is still too weak a term. So the Holy Spirit employs the yet bolder figure, and does not say "broken down" but "poured out"; "poured out" not as oil slowly flows from a jug, but quickly as water rushes down the mountain-side; and this is couched in strong, impetuous language, as though to make you sense in your inmost self the inward exhaustion of Jesus: "Outpoured like water"!

Outpoured like water! That is, even as one drop falling down draws the other after it, and after that again a drop and ever more drops, by irresistible pressure, rush after one another, yea, *all* the water, as in a single gush, comes along, and rushes down into the deep, so it was with your Savior. A beginning of the flowing off of His strength, that immediately increased, swelled in volume, became ever stronger, till it was, as though like a vat He was turned over,

and suddenly all His strength of life and all the courage of His soul and all the energy of His will, as a waterstream was poured out into the abyss.

It is nameless POWERLESSNESS, that this image portrays. To be disabled utterly! No lip able to open; no eye able to turn upward; no courage able to put heart into the will; that sinking of the pulses; that faintness of the soul that would yet pray; that namelessness of anxious and oppressive impotency; so powerless, that even the sense of the same is too great an exertion for the heart that is altogether melted away.

And this is what the Holy Spirit wills, that you should carefully observe with Jesus! The cross by itself is not the bitterest death. It is not in that. Such a cross innumerable others have suffered. But no one save Jesus alone, while hanging on the cross, descended into hell, has on it carried the burden of God's wrath against the sin of our whole race; no one save He, while dying on the cross, in an unseen way, was crucified in His soul with an anguish of powerlessness as of dying a thousand deaths!

O, to be Jesus! Son of God! To possess a power, like the Lion of Judah's tribe even in the roaring of His death-cry still betrayed! And then . . . . from pure obedience, from tender compassion, to be willing to descend into that terrible distress and oppression of so complete a *powerlessness* of inward impotency, do you not feel, all ye, that are so impotent in yourselves, what that struggle, that indescribable torture of soul has cost Jesus?

And yet . . . if once He had not done this! If once He had withheld His heart, from melting away as wax in the midst of His bowels, what think ye,

could He ever have been your Savior? Is not your powerlessness absolute and terrible? And does it not then become you to have such an High priest, Who came down so wonderfully to where you were lying, that in the arms of His compassion He might bear you up on high?

O, wondrous mystery of grace!

You thought yourself powerless. But no, you have not confessed yourself yet powerless enough. Become absolutely powerless . . . . . for then is Jesus with you.

And again, however powerless, and near to utter collapse, never despair, my brother! Never cast aside the staff of hope. He, Who was once the most powerless of all, is now seated at the right hand of *the Power* of the Throne of God.

XXXIV.

MY LONELY ONE

MORE STILL than in the Gospels, the Messiah has portrayed the soul-perplexing nature of His suffering, in Psalm and Prophecy.

The Psalmist not merely guessed; the Prophet not merely conjectured.

No, the Spirit Himself complained and groaned from the presentiment and foreknowledge of the unpreventable suffering, which was not merely coming, but was already in part endured. Have you never read in Isaiah 65, how it held good already before the incarnation: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted"? and have you never heard the holy apostle Peter declare to the Church, that it was "The Spirit of Christ Himself Who did signify and testified beforehand the suffering, that was to come upon Christ!"? (I, i, ii.)

With us it is so often a smarting of the wound in our heart afresh by the *after*-weeping in our soul of painful remembrances. But with the Immanuel it was positive foreknowledge; a knowing beforehand; up to the minutest particulars; a seeing in advance; a living through beforehand of what was coming; and no less a meanwhile being afflicted with the afflictions of His people upon earth, His Israel, which already now, as "servant of the Lord" bore the dark shadow of His suffering, and, be it at a great distance, exhibited the form of His suffering.

For this reason the superficial soul remains content with what *the Evangelists* have observed of the suffering of the Lord; but the more serious soul

listens to Jesus Himself when in Prophecy and Psalm He utters the deep tones of complaint from His violently stirred emotion.

The Evangelists narrate, that Jesus on the cross has cried: "*Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani*", but only the Psalmody in Psalm 22 makes you understand the world of dreadfulness, that lies behind these deep notes of complaint.

So from Gethsemane, according to the Evangelists, you catch a supplicating tone, in which the Lord Jesus gave vent to His unspeakable feeling of deep forsakeness, when He said to Peter: "Could ye not watch with me one hour, my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death!", ... but yet the key to the passion mystery of this deep heart-brokenness not the Evangelist again, but the Psalmist offers you.

Just listen! In that Psalm Jesus complains from a still deeper depth of soul, and calls His soul itself "my lonely one", the altogether "forsaken one" within.

Also in Psalm 25:16 this tremendous sufferer complains: "Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted!" So in Psalm 35:17 (Dutch version), it reads: "Lord, rescue my soul from their destructions, my *lonely one* from the young lions." But from still deeper depth goes up the cry of the Man of sorrows in Psalm 22:20: "Deliver my *lonely one* from the violence of the dog."

By that "lonely one" Jesus means "His own soul".

He himself is that "lonely one", that "forsaken one", that one Who is thrown back upon Himself, and the to Himself abandoned One of spirit.

And only he who has overheard this "my *lonely one* from the violence of the dog" in its crying depth,

will understand the *Lama Sabachthani* in the opening words of that selfsame psalm of lamentation: "O, God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, me, the lonely One!"

Forsakenness casts an indescribable anguish upon the soul.

That lies in our human nature.

See it in young children, how afraid they sometimes are to be alone; they can not stand it; and if in their fear you were to leave them alone too long, they would become terror-stricken.

Especially when trouble and sorrow steal upon you, and unholy powers press toward you, this need of company makes itself so strongly felt.

When at midnight suddenly a heavy thunder storm breaks loose, involuntarily every one gets up and dresses himself and seeks the other. Gathered in company together we prefer to live through that menacing rumbling of the elements of nature.

He who wakes from a startling dream, is not content, until there is some one with him, who speaks the word of reassurance.

This comes from the entirely true, instinctive sense, that all these dreadful powers are too overwhelming for a soul to endure in loneliness; they do not come upon us as individuals alone, but upon all of us together, and therefore should be borne by all in company.

But when suffering overtakes us in more cruelly personal ways, it deprives us of that consoling quiet, which the reassuring and comforting presence of others brings; and leaves us to struggle and toil forsaken and alone.

And in this forsakenness the anxious strain of

bitterest homesickness adds itself to the suffering, which we already bear. It brings unspeakable sadness of heart, and it cries, but with tears, which no one wipes away. It comes up into our throat with stifling effect. We become perplexed of soul, till we can not longer endure it. And, then, that bitter knowledge, that whether we groan or call, nothing avails.

This your Savior underwent. He more deeply than any one. He alone, in all His depth of bitterness and mortal perplexity.

He *was* not merely "lonely"; but His soul *was* "His lonely one".

Not merely because no one was with Him and no one supported Him, but more still because no one understood or comprehended Him.

Gloriously, it is true, have the Apostles later on jubilated in the atonement of our sins through the Blood of the Cross; but when Jesus struggled in Gethsemane or groaned on the cross, what, I pray you, has a Peter understood of the bearing of a wrath of God?

Sometimes also something of that sorrowful loneliness overtakes us; when in our environment there is no note that gives echo to the cries of our heart; when every complaint, which as a raven we let out from the ark of our soul, flies abroad and hovers upon the waters of life around us, but presently returns to us, having found no spot for the hollow of its foot.

Then we thirst for sympathy, and it is not there. We beg for a friendly word from the heart, and we meet nothing but coldness all around us. Brass walls on every side. Endless hollownesses and

emptinesses everywhere. No word that does us good. No note that offers us the love of sympathy. Of our bitter suffering there is no understanding, no perception, no feeling!

Yet, however deep at such times, our soul goes under and threatens to be stifled in its mortal perplexity, a child of God never goes through such loneliness as Jesus once went through.

As often as we partake of the holy sacrament, the church in her liturgies assures her children in these heart-touching terms, that: "He was forsaken of God, that we should never be forsaken!"

This comforting message of the Holy Sacrament keeps singing in our ears, when we sit down in loneliness, and the hunger after sympathy wrings our heart.

In our forsakenness we always have our Savior, Whose "lonely One" was once unspeakably forsaken for our sakes.

But in this loneliness there was no help for Him.

For our sakes by the curse *everything* was denied Him.

When overborne with loneliness and anguish of soul, all there was for Him, was the "violence of the dog", i. e. of man, who shamelessly depraved, still dared to bark and to bay at the Holy One of God.

Taunting Him, when alone with His "lonely one" in sorrow of soul, those brute-like people added unspeakably to the suffering of your Savior.

XXXV.

THEY THAT PASSED BY REVILED HIM

WHEN THE DEVIL, says Luke, (4:13) had ended all the temptation, and had not found anything in Jesus, *he departed from Him for a season.*

Hence he did come back, and Scripture clearly gives us to understand, that this return of Satan took place, when Jesus was about to drink "the cup".

You observe this first, at Jesus' first announcement of "that cup", when vehemently and full of fire Peter answers: "Lord, this shall not be unto thee", and Jesus turns him back with the: *"Get thee behind me, Satan".* You feel it in the touching word of Jesus: "Satan hath greatly desired to have you, that *he may sift you as wheat,* but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). You observe it, when it says: "then *Satan entered into the heart of Judas".* Jesus Himself expresses it directly when He says: *"The Prince of this world cometh,* and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). It gleams through in all the soul-afflicting struggle in Gethsemane. It was foretold in the paradise-word, that Satan should bruise the heel of the seed of the woman. It was tangible in many a demoniac feature which needlessly aggravated the suffering of the Man of sorrows. But it was most strongly, most brutally evident, when Jesus impotently hung upon the cross, and immediately a flood of poisonous reviling rose up against Him, and demoniac lust made itself master of the bystanders, wilfully to grieve, to harass, and to insult the dying Savior.

One Evangelist calls it "reviling", another "rail-

ing", a third "deriding", but the word matters little; with abject, ironic laughter they taunted, mocked and vexed the dying Jesus, that before He died, they might still hurl more darts into His heart.

Not that they used invective. This with these wanton multitudes might have been kept within the bounds of the human. No, but they did what Satan had already done in the wilderness.

If, counting upon Jesus' hunger, Satan had said to Him in a cutting and defiant way: *"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread"*, and satisfy thy hunger—here at the cross priest and people cry: *"If thou be the Son of God, save thyself and come down from the cross."*

Thus said they that passed by. Thus spake the high priests and the scribes. Thus spake one of the fellow-crosslings. And the Roman soldiers, who naturally knew nothing of a Messiah, forsaking their military honor, took part in the wild cry.

Here you should have in mind the passionate manner of the East. Jews that live among us, have become like western people, and yet, if you have ever seen Jews altercate one against the other and rave and rage, you must have been struck by the vehemence of their gesticulations, the sharp and cutting tone of their voices and the rending expression of their drawn facial features.

And on Golgotha this was still more terrible. There this was unfalsified and unweakened eastern. The flaring passion, the excited face, the body swaying to the rhythm of vehemently stirred emotion, the voice with its deep-throated sound seething and hissing. Hellish, demoniacal!

And dying, Jesus had to hear this; He had to see

this; this broke loose against Him, that, if possible, with poisonous arrow it might pierce His soul.

You can imagine the flush of repugnance which showed itself at this upon the already paling face of your Savior.

That was the answer from human lips to His prayer for His enemies, His executioners.

Do you not feel what it must have been to Jesus, to die for *men,* and so in person to see that *humanity* before Him?

Our human nature is vulnerable from *two* sides. One can rage against us by injuring us in the *body;* and one can rage against us by hurting us in *our soul,* in our character, in our inner personality.

As to *the body* they had spared Jesus nothing. They had jostled and cuffed Him, had spit their venom upon Him, had struck Him on the head, had scourged Him till the blood trickled down His back, had pressed a crown of thorns upon His temples, had made Him drag along His own cross from Gabbatha. And then the terrible crucifixion, that hammering of the nails through His hands, that continuous, weakening loss of blood, till finally strength failed Him, and dying was evidently near.

But bloodthirstiness is not stopped by the sight of blood. Bloodthirstiness itself has its deeper origin in the heart. And at length it is the *soul* of evil, that aims directly at the *soul* of its victim, and can not rest until from some bitter rejoinder it becomes aware, that inwardly and poisonously it has hit its victim, and has mortally wounded him.

Then no arrow and no rod and no sabre, no scourge nor crossbeam are of use. No, that bitterest anger cools itself *by the word.*

Then the tormentor hits upon the most cutting word, that can enter in most deeply, and can wound most painfully. And that word is then uttered in a tone of voice, in which the hatred of contempt gives rein to its cruelty. And eye, and facial feature, and gesticulation accompany the poisonous word, so as to bring it home to the heart of the sufferer, and to revel in the wound which it inflicts upon that heart.

This is what lies in the tragic communication of the Evangelist, that they *who passed by reviled Jesus.*

A last outpouring of malice. A last effort to wound Jesus, before He died, still more deeply than with scourge-cord or thorn-crown, at the most sensitive point of His heart.

That *wounding* with the *word* has here an entirely unique significance.

Man that has become poisoned *can* wound with the word, because, altogether uniquely, to him, above all other creatures, God has imparted the gift of *the word.*

The storm howls, the lion roars, the serpent hisses, and these audible utterances have power to make you tremble with mortal anxiety, but this is not the word. To wound with the word, man alone can do, he, who is created after the image of God.

He does not merely utter sounds, but thoughts; and in those thoughts he can mix poison; and then he can put an edge to that cutting thought; and put a grappling-iron into it, till it wounds, poisons and remains lodged.

Christ is *the Word,* the Word that in the beginning was with God, and was God. And from Him

the word has come to us, the thought and the utterance of the thought.

Our honor, our Divine privilege, if that *word* and that thought flowed from our mouth according to the Divine appointment. But also our deepest self-desecration, when we direct that gift of the word against the holy, and produce not honor and praise, but railing and reviling, reviling to wound and to kill, where the word should breathe love and quicken life.

And here this word lapsed into reviling turns itself against *the Word.* It is the Giver of the word, Who is outraged by means of His own gift.

It is Jesus, *as* the Word, *as* the Son of God, Whose Divine heart, in His dying woes, is still trampled under foot. *"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."*

So Satan prompted them. So Jesus felt it. Such was the intention in the wound, that was inflicted upon Jesus.

But they that passed by, knew not what they did.

They did not believe, that Jesus was the Son of God, the eternal Word, and Israel's Messiah. To them Jesus was a fanatic, one who misled himself and had misled the people.

Their sin was, that they did not believe on Jesus. But in this unbelief they became the instruments of Satan, and by them *Satan has* bitterly vexed Jesus even in His dying.

In calm, holy majesty Jesus endured also that bitterest assault, and here also was the word fulfilled: "The Prince of this world cometh, *but hath nothing in me.*"

Not Jesus, but the fellow crossling entered a protest against this barbed reviling: Dost thou not

fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And then Jesus spake of Paradise. No thought of revenge, only heavenly thoughts filled His soul.

But upon us Satan continues his evil handiwork. We glory in childship. We confess to belong to Jesus. We claim to know, that we have passed from death into life. And now Satan comes, sometimes himself in a temptation, but mostly by people, and says to us: If ye are children of God, why do you not resist me, why can sin every time take you by surprise, why do you every time again fall short in your faith, in your love, in your holy walk?

In substance the selfsame reviling of our state. To Jesus: If thou be the Son of God, show the power of the Son of God. To us: If thou be a child of God, show the moral power of a child of God.

For us this is the harder, because we know that we are guilty. Because the reproach in our soul gives an echo to Satan's reviling. And yet we struggle against it. Guilty children, but still children of our God. Humbling ourselves before God; but as against Satan spiritually courageous, defending ourselves: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33).

And this you *may*, this you *must*, this you *can* do.

But consider well: This you *can*, this you *may* do, not for anything you are in yourself, but alone because your Savior has drunk for you the cup of reviling, and, because by no Satan even will He let you be snatched from His hand.

And therefore to Him, Who dying on the cross for your sake bore reviling, give the tribute of your worship, of your love, of your never ending thanks.

XXXVI

HE WAS DESPISED

THERE is ever yet among us no name of so sublime, no name of so lovely, no name of so holy a sound, as the name of our precious Jesus.

However much a part of the church may have fallen away from Him, and tone-giving people have turned their back on Him, and society lives more and more without Him, the name of Jesus is still honored everywhere. As yet no one dares to abuse the Unique and Only One.

Many have wandered away from the *real* Mediator at ever farther distances, and the living Savior has been replaced by a "Rabbi of Nazareth", who is honored merely as a religious genius, or as an example of gentleness. But however much the image of the Savior may be falsified, even under these incorrect aspects, homage is still paid Him. Also to the modernists, even to those, who stand back of the modernists, the name of Jesus is ever yet a name, that inspires something noble.

There are exceptions already, and when one has seen the caricatures, with which the Jews in Germany and the ringleaders in Belgium, dared to defame the glorious personality of our Lord, one trembles at the thought, that perchance already in the third generation, this general human respect also for Jesus shall turn into most shameful revilement;—but we are not so far along yet. In our better circles, even in the public market, the name of Jesus is still a *celebrated* name. Almost no one among us, who still has an *ideal*, but links it with the name of *Jesus*.

And where even *this* tie is severed, cool silence is always still a tribute of respect, which holds back the invective of hatred.

Once this was different.

When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Olives and was led to the Jewish hall of judgment, and was made a spectacle of at Gabbatha, and at Golgotha hung upon the accursed wood—there was *no* honor for Jesus' name.

Then to that glorious name, there cleaved disgrace and shame.

Such humiliating, offensive and galling revilement, which even the most warmly devoted of His most intimate disciples, dared not face; and when they asked him: "Art thou also one of them?", he sought refuge in cursing and swearing, that he might evade the very appearance, lest that revilement and that despisal, which was heaped upon His Savior, should also extend to him.

And that revilement, that despisal, which was so offensive and grievous, that even a Peter shrank from it as from a poisonous serpent, that deep disgrace your Savior has borne. He Who felt that ignominy so much more deeply than Peter, has stood arrayed with it before the eyes of all, and has been crucified with it in common sight, openly before those staring eyes, so full of shameless hatred. And when His blood was being shed because of us; and His breath was shortening; a still more poisonous arrow, than pains of death, killed the honor of His Divine name to the sense of honor of His death-pang troubled heart.

Honor is better than life, and to the man of honor

his name is more holy than the life-warmth of his own blood.

To have honor, honor above every name, was the glorious reward, that, because of the travail of His soul and for the deep despisal He endured, the Man of sorrows has received.

But to obtain this honor above all glory and this name above every name, our Jesus has not merely borne the cross, but He has also despised the shame, and bowed the head low, very low, under the dreadful scorn and revilement, that base envy spewed out upon Him.

It was a terrible turn at Jerusalem.

Thus far Jesus had avoided the circles in which they hated Him.

Faithful-hearted disciples, admiring friends, kindly women surrounded Him. The multitude that hung upon His lips, the healed who gave Him thanks, the hopeless who touched the hem of His garment, could scarcely be repressed; they wanted to make Jesus king; and on Palm-Sunday they had strewn palm branches before His feet, and spread their garments in His way, and gladly and loudly had they sung in Jerusalem's gates: "Hosanna to the Son of David."

Thus far Jesus had drunk in love, had seen grateful looks around Him, had enjoyed the homage of many.

But now, in the garden of Olives, at once everything becomes different.

It is the hour of darkness.

The good turn aside, the evil appear in the foreground. John flees. Judas remains with Him.

And now begins the deep, the terrible despisal, the grieving disdain and the insulting revilement.

That despisal also was a part of the cup which He must drink.

Ages before He had seen it in advance, and at the sight of it had complained at David's lips: "I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying: He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, if he hath delight in him!" (Ps. 22:6-8).

And when at last the hour of darkness came, yea, that multitude has *actually stood by;* that wild mob, that hooted at Him and howled for His blood; then they have been there, those soldiers, who oblivious of all honor, have pursued their bent towards mockery at the expense of our dear Savior; and with their hellish faces they have stood before the dying Jesus raving and screaming, those inhuman priests and wise men of Israel, when they cried: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

In that deep despisal there was something of *the curse,* which, that He might redeem us from it, Jesus has borne for us.

Those men and women who poured out such deep hatred upon Him, did not do this of themselves. He who was back of it and spurred them on and poisoned their lips to revile Jesus, was the old enemy, who had truly left Him for a time, but who was always still the Prince of this world, and who had awaited his hour.

From hell that poisonous language of insulting revilement was inspired by Satan to those instru-

ments of his unholy wrath. They knew not what they did. Only listen: Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do!

Not that therefore those men, those women, those priests are guiltless. Far from it. He, who, where or whenever, suffers himself to be used of Satan, commits dreadful sin, in that he serves *Satan,* where he should serve *God.*

But it implies this, that those persons who then on Golgotha maliciously reviled our Lord, were no worse, no more wicked. no more corrupt, than we, as often as we lend ourselves to Satan, to be employed in his accursed service.

This is what it declares to us, that all our kneeling at Jesus' feet by no means clears us from fellow-guilt in the revilements that were then cast upon Jesus.

This your soul should learn, that henceforth you should no more think: Those shameful people reviled Jesus, but I, devout one, worship Him.

No, no, deep down in your evil heart you should feel: In that revilement my heart too has guilt, and that I do not rail at, but love my Savior, is pure grace, a thousand times forfeited grace of my God.

And when at times your own heart is afraid of reproach, and, so, shrinks back from the scorn and despisal of men, let your soul be mindful of two things.

First that to suffer reproach and shame with Jesus, and for His sake, is so blessed and glorious a share in the divine suffering of your dear, precious Savior, that far from complaining: "This is what makes life so bitter to me!" you should rather rejoice

and say: "In this reproach and in this revilement a redeemed one of the Lord comes to life!"

Much more still.

Real abuse, actual revilement could be your portion only, if, in the great day of judgment, all your sins and all your evil thoughts were to be openly rehearsed before the world of men and before the world of angels, and you, to your deep shame, were to be held up to common view in all your nakedness.

My brother, that you escape this revilement, and this shame, you owe to Jesus, to Him Who was despised, that you should never succumb under despisal and shame.

Oh, let your soul say thanks for this, to the "Deliverer from shame".

XXXVII.

WONDERFULLY COME DOWN

(*Good Friday*)

ON THE WAY to Emmaus Luke and Cleopas have received an instruction from the Lord, which is still the pious envy of God's children.

How we would have been entranced, if we ourselves might have heard Him, as He went through all the books of the Old Testament, to show from Moses and the prophets, "that it behooved the Christ to suffer these things, that thereby He might enter into His glory."

How each of us feels, that the Lord would have shown us His holy Messiah-name in passages and images and facts of Old Testament Scripture, where we in reading would scarcely have looked for it.

When they who make too freely a use of symbolism, undertake to fill in this gap, by giving us their insights into Old Testament contents and teachings, it does not satisfy us. What they present is not alive. There is no pulsation there. No holy enthusiasm is athrill in it. We do not see in this the Messiah-life of our Lord.

Thoughtful reading of the Old Testament affords the soul better guidance than this, and when in Lamentations (1, 12) you hear God's prophet of Jerusalem complain: "All ye, that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!" each child of God overhears in this a prophecy of the cry that was heard on Golgotha, and it is to him, as though his dying Savior calls out to him from Gethsemane and from the cross: "All ye that pass by,

behold, and see whether there ever was a suffering suffered, as I suffer; a wrong such as is done unto me?"

And therefore when Jerusalem declined, and came down and its people went into exile, those stones have not felt this and the veil in the temple has not felt this, but the Holy Spirit has made the prophet prophesy of this, that the lamentations and mortal complaints of dying Zion were but the prelude to the dreadful spoliation, that would once overtake the Messiah in His suffering.

The fall, the coming down, the collapse and the sinking away was so dreadful.

A place chosen of God. The place where He had caused His glory to dwell. His lovely habitation from whence the savor of sacrifice rose up before His holy presence. And then such a city trodden down by the deniers of God, and by the godless spewed upon and destroyed by fire. And at length brutal heathen standing on the top of the mountain of the Lord, to proclaim abroad with shrill voices and crying: "Jehovah is defeated, His house is laid low!"

For this the prophet had lamented: "*How wonderfully Zion has come down.*"

Reduced, no, that is not the word; but *come down* must express the depth of the humiliation; and even that does not say it all, and therefore he laments: "*How wonderfully is Zion come down.*"

Once it was sung in that Zion: "Ye high hill of Bashan, why exalt yourself against Zion? God Himself has desired this hill and shall dwell in it forever!" (Ps. 68:16). And now, Bashan rejoiced and climbed the high mountain of pride, while from

Zion's hill nothing but smoke from ruins ascended on high.

And yet, even this was but prophecy of the indescribable, unspeakable humiliation into which Jesus would sink away.

He, at whose manger God's angels sang of glory; on Whose lips hung thousands; Who had healed every one's diseases; Who on the mount of Transfiguration had glistened in Majesty; and of Whom it had been said at His Baptism: "This is He in whom I am well pleased." He, God manifest in the flesh, the express Image of His Substance, Who bore the reflection of His glory. And that glorious Person laid hold on by rough officers of justice, the wrists bound with cords, jostled along and maltreated, scorned and spit in the face, scourged with scourges, and cursed at, and presently with nails driven through the palms of His hands nakedly exposed on the shamewood; O, confess, is it not also here, even still far more so than at Jerusalem's ruin: "*How wonderfully come down!*"

No, the depth into which your Savior sank away, your eye does not fathom.

You cannot reach it.

Of this you could only obtain some perception, if you yourself had sunk into that abyss of eternal doom.

That depth Satan fathoms. That depth fathom the eternally lost. That depth is as deep, as where the bottom lies of eternal separation from God.

Therein every child of God should have had to be lost. Into that depth every one who is saved should have had to go down. So low and wonderfully low would you have had to sink away eternally.

To this depth He, your Savior, has come down for the sake of the people of God.

Himself to drink all, that for you would have been eternally the bitter drink of doom.

To be plunged into that stream of curse and death, in which you would have been swallowed up for ever.

To come down to that deepest, that wonderfully deep humiliation, which would have been eternally your lot, had there been no help appointed by this Hero!

And therefore the Scripture exhorts you: Look at that cross, behold the dreadfulness of that secret and hidden suffering. Hear the cry: "All ye that pass by behold, and see, whether there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," and then with the prophet in amazement and with astonishment of soul, exclaim, with respect to your Savior: "How wonderfully come down!"

He Who commands angels and Seraphs, writhing in the dust and in home-sickness of heart, so that an angel must comfort Him!

He Who shall once be judge of all, as malefactor set before the judge on earth.

He, Whom all flesh shall once call upon for salvation, as scum and scrapings, not worthy of a spot and place on earth, hung upon the accursed wood and in His dying still reviled.

Prey of death, He, the Lord of Life, Who once shall destroy all death by his power.

Who called Lazarus from the tomb, is now Himself carried into the tomb.

O, thou, godless one, who are saved, is it not wonderful, that your great and glorious Savior could

come down so low in that fathomless depth of humiliation!

And this He did *because of* you. He did this *for* you. To prepare for you in your dying, instead of this eternal sinking away, an eternal promotion in glory.

Let your soul then be entreated, not to pass by the way where the cross stands; but to stop, and look on that cross; and with all your heart and soul to go down into the depth of that humiliation.

Who of us has ever commensurably sensed what Immanual did for us, and suffered for us.

Now we have become accustomed to it.

Such is the corruption of our nature.

You hear of the cross so continually, that almost it no more interests you.

But for this very reason Good Friday is of use.

For it points you to it; it draws you towards it; it induces you to think and to meditate on that cross.

And if you may do this, and look upon it, and enter into it with your soul, Who He is, and what He suffered there, and how the wrath of God was upon the Son of God, O, then it shall no longer be common to you, but it shall arouse also your amazement, and the soul within your innermost self also shall exclaim: "How wonderfully low has He come down!"

XXXVIII.

WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON

JESUS first avoids the *mother*-name. He does not say: "Mother, dear Mother", but seemingly in an almost indifferent sense: "*Woman*, behold, thy son." And only then He speaks to the disciple whom He loved: "Son, behold, thy *mother*". But as regards Himself, there is no mention here of *child*- or *mother*-relationship.

This was not so only now. Already at Cana in Galilee, when He turned water into wine, He did not say: Mother, but "*Woman*" what have I to do with thee? When the people of Capernaum said: "Behold, thy *mother* and thy brethren seek thee", Jesus answered them, saying: "Who is my mother or my brethren? For he that doeth the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister and mother." Even when, scarcely twelve years old, He had remained behind in the temple, and His mother sought Him with care, it does not say, that He called her by the mother-name. Nowhere, in the Evangelists do we read, that in His public appearance He ever greeted His *mother* in Mary.

This can not be accidental, but must have been done with determinate forethought. He did not stand in the ordinary relation to her of child to his mother, but she, as redeemed and endued with grace, stood related to Him as her Savior. He did not believe in her in any such sense as she by faith was bound to her Redeemer. Endued with grace above all women in this, that she had carried the Savior of the world under her heart, she was

deprived of what is so rich and so beautiful to every other mother; even the dependence, with which ordinarily the matured son cleaves to his aged mother. As often as Mary seeks this wealth, she is tenderly turned back by Jesus. He *could* not be to her, what otherwise a son must be to his mother. Here the tie of *blood* was lost in the tie of the *spirit,* that bound her to her Savior.

Only here at the cross, just before the "It is finished" sounded from Golgotha, it is the earthly tie, that is joined again in speech.

Had not Simeon in the temple foretold her, that once a sword was to go through her soul?

And now that it comes to this, that as one *redeemed* she believes, but at the same time as *mother* suffers, Jesus bethinks Himself of the emptiness in her mother-life which His dying would occasion, and so from the cross He says to her, aiming at John, who stood near her: "Woman, behold, thy son!"

They were courageous women, who from out the gate of Jerusalem, dared to tread the way to Golgotha, and to take their stand near the cross, at the risk of insult and mockery on the part of the bloodthirsty mob.

Peter had succumbed, even three times before Jesus had yet been sentenced; but Mary, and those other women, braved every danger, and with mother-heart fidelity awaited the last dying look of Jesus.

John they had taken with them, the disciple who by the urgency of love was bound most strongly of all the other disciples to Jesus.

First they had lived through that anxious Friday morning in Jerusalem. Not improbably they had

early been awakened from sleep by John, when he had fled Gethsemane, and been worried by the tidings that Judas had betrayed Jesus, that the watch had arrested Him and had taken Him to the Sanhedrin.

Then what they did, whether they went to the gate of the hall of judgment, to learn the verdict, or whether they have stood among the noisy multitude afar off on the market square of Gabbatha, or that John went forth alone to find out what he could, and at length brought her the dreadful tiding, that Jesus had been sentenced to the cross,—the Evangelists do not say, and no surmisal can avail.

Neither does it tell, that they went along by the road, when Jesus was led forth to the place of execution. Only when the crucifixion had taken place, and things were approaching the end, is mention made of them, and then only by John.

First they remained unnoticed among the thronging multitude. Only at the last moment it seems, that Mary, when she saw death approaching, pressed forward, probably supported by John. And when, with a look expressive of nameless anguish and tender motherly compassion, for the last time she looked up to her dying Savior, Jesus also looked at her, and not too loud, so as not to rouse the mockery of the bystanders, but loud enough for her to hear, He said: "*Woman, behold thy son.*"

That at that moment Jesus suffered with His mother, as she suffered with Him, with the depth of His human fellow-feeling is not otherwise thinkable.

There was also refreshment in it for His heart. In Gethsemane all His disciples had fled, and in them there lacked the manly courage to comfort His

soul, when it was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Close by the court of the Sanhedrin Peter had denied Him thrice. And since then all day long His soul had been terrorized by the stare of angry looks, by the bloodthirstiness of the priests, and of the howling multitudes. Even while He hung on the cross, the roughness of the soldiers and the railing of the priests had been torture to His soul. All through those long, dreadful hours He had trodden the wine-press alone. It seemed as though no single look of human eye was permitted to speak to Him of love and of commiseration.

And see, in the midst of these dark shadows, beams forth towards Him the love from a woman's eye, the look of love from His mother and from the disciple who among them all was most dear to Him.

A glistening of love, as though to reconcile Him with that humanity, for which He was going to die. A refreshing in the most awful moment, appointed Him of the Father.

And still, a refreshing that could not be unmixed. For although with holy joy Jesus drank this draught of human love, at the same time His own love made Him fathom, what went on in that tortured heart of His mother. He knew, this was the moment, that ruthlessly the sword went through the motherheart.

To be mother, mother of such a Son, and then to see that Son, amid shame and revilement, dying on the accursed wood, O, even though for Jesus' sake at that moment she held back her tears, Jesus has seen those bitter tears hide themselves behind the strained eye.

The sword, that went through her soul, was a sword-thrust the more through His own tender, finely-sensitive heart.

And therefore Jesus thinks not of Himself. Full of compassion His love goes out to this woman succumbing under her sorrow, and yet in her grief so courageously heroic; and more in a whisper than aloud, He says softly to her, but so that John also hears it: "*Woman, behold thy Son.*"

There lay in this word, if you like, also an assurance of the provision of a *home*. Also in His dying Jesus does not close His eye to the needs of this earthly life. Mary can not stay alone. The disgrace of the public execution of her son would haunt her. Who knows what anxious forebodings, that perchance they might even lay hands on her, and because of her son arrest her, may have filled her heart in that hour of terror. And therefore Jesus provides a point of support for her foreboding heart. Among the people John would protect her, as a son his mother.

And from that hour that disciple, whom Jesus loved, took her unto his own home.

But how much more there lay in that deep word.

With Jesus there is no trace of a love, which encourages any undue excitement of feeling. No moment do His feelings carry Him with them. He knows, that for Mary it will be the bitterest trial, to rise above the earthly tie, that bound her to Him, and from now on spiritually alone to be blessed in her Savior; stronger still; presently to jubilate in that self-same cross, the sight of which now crushes her motherheart. And therefore Jesus does not strengthen that tie of blood by letting the word "Mother" pass over His lips, but rather loosens that tie, by addressing her now as *Woman*.

And where in its emptiness and loss the mother-

heart can find no rest, there Jesus appoints her another who with childlike tenderness would respond to her motherly love; there Jesus points her to the warmest-hearted of His disciples, and from now on gives her John as her adopted son.

Tender, holy exchange of substitution.

He Himself dies as Mediator substituting for John, and John shall substitute Him as son to His redeemed mother.

Here is the mystery.

Mary, blessed among women, who, more bitterly than ever a mother, suffered for her child, and who, because her Child suffered for her, that He might redeem her, had to loosen the tie of "mother to child", and transfer it to John.

And in dying Jesus loosens the mother-tie, and most tenderly binds up the wound in the mother-heart.

So the mother who was stricken with grief, is comforted. From His cross Jesus shows His mother the two-fold grace: He redeems her through the blood, also shed for her, and into her motherheart He drops the balm of consolation, by transferring the love from her motherheart to the disciple whom He loved.

XXXIX.

I THIRST

AS the Man of sorrows hung on the cross to die, one complaint only was uttered about the suffering of *His soul,* and likewise only one complaint about suffering *after the body.* Utter anguish of soul forced from Him the *"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani"*, and the agonizing death struggle after the flesh drew from Him the cry: *"I thirst"*.

In that "I thirst" spake the mortal anguish of the wound fever. His flesh was truly *human* flesh, His blood in truth *our* blood. And therefore when His body was injured, and He was cruelly wounded in hand and foot, and the weight of the body hanging by the splitting wound in the hand, disturbed the circulation of the blood, and occasioned inward rebellion in His veins, it could not help, but that the heat of the wound fever must make itself felt. And this burning in the blood was bound to increase moment by moment, till the breath in the lungs was set on fire, and the moisture gland in the mouth dried up, and the tongue could scarcely move, and not without great effort could He utter the "I thirst".

"I thirst", so did your Savior languish for a cup of cold water. That there might be one who, from compassion and commiseration, might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool His burning tongue.

"I Thirst!" so He cried, not to evade death, but that before He died He might taste the sweet of human comfort.

"I thirst!" because from thirst His mouth was almost in the grip of lockjaw, and He must still utter

the final words: "It is finished", and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Thirst is a something so dreadful. Hunger is a sharp sword, but thirst is as a poisonous arrow, which penetrates into the very pith and substance of our being.

Hunger comes from the flesh, but thirst from the *blood,* and in the blood is the stirring, the motion of our human life. In the blood body and soul touch one another. For as God had declared unto Israel, in the blood is *the soul.*

Therefore it was the blood also that counted in the atonement. This was seen already in the offerings that were offered in Israel for sin. For truly the body of these animals was broken, but not as end; for the purpose always was that *the blood should be shed* and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat.

And so it was here with the Lamb of God.

Of the Lamb of God also you read it every time, that on His death hangs our life, but almost always it is *His blood* shed for you, to which the holy apostles refer.

With Him there is also a breaking of the body, but only as means to the shedding of His blood, and in the shedding of that holy blood is your reconciliation.

How could it be otherwise? Where we had sinned our life away, and the life of our blood had been poisoned, and we had continued to sin in that blood, how could our Mediator bring about our forgiveness, except as He takes of our blood, and make this blood taken from us the vehicle of His own life, and in our guilty blood pour out His life upon the altar of the Holy!

Just because in the shedding of His blood lay our reconciliation, it could not be hunger, that distressed Him, but in dying on Golgotha He must needs be distressed by insufferable thirst.

Not in hunger, but in *thirst* does spiritual suffering play its part in bodily suffering.

Jesus Himself shows us this in the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus, in which He sketches that rich man as opening his eyes in hell. And see, what there in hellish pains consumes and distresses him, is not hunger but *thirst.* He perishes from thirstpain, and would give a world for a drop of cold water to cool the tip of his tongue.

All hellish pain is described as false burning and unholy glow, an inextinguishable fire, that calls for water, but which no stream of water can put out.

And when over against this natural thirstwoe of hell the blessedness of etenal life is outlined for us, *this* always stands in the foreground, that in that blessedness there shall be *no more thirst.* When the new heaven and the new earth have come down in the vision of John on Patmos, and he saw the heavenly Jerusalem, the Lamb of God stood before him, and said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and *I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of life freely!*" (Rev. 21:6).

Surely your Savior is also the Bread of life, but yet He puts a far stronger emphasis upon the fact, that He shall quench your eternal thirst. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst!" (John 4:14). And standing in the porch of Jerusalem's temple, to call the people to Him, the invitation rang from His lips: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink!" (John 7:37).

"To be athirst" was the crying, panting image in which psalmist and prophets of old pictured the longing of a soul after the living God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O, God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!" (Ps. 42:1). In Psalm 63 it reads: "My soul thirsteth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is!" And as already from of old in Isaiah (63:1) the Messiah calls His own, His voice goes forth saying: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!" God's most glorious promises are, that He "will pour water upon him that is thirsty" (Is. 44:3) and will make "the thirsty land springs of water" (Is. 35:7). Yea, God Himself, the Eternal Being, is called the Source and Well and Fountain of all good.

So do our blood and our thirst hang together; and because in our blood there is also the life of our soul, in this thirst of the blood the image of our bodily and of our spiritual suffering merges into one; but so also is *the quenching of that thirst* the glorious image of the banishment of all hellish pains and the enrichment with heavenly wealth in a glory without end.

Thus when your Savior had to say: "I thirst!" (John 19:28) there spake in this troubled cry something of hellish woe. It was *your* thirst, which you should have thirsted eternally, which for your sake your Redeemer endured; a thirst risen in the blood which at His Incarnation He had taken from your blood; a dreadful drying up of the lifeblood to which for your salvation's sake, He had bound His own Divine life.

When He now cried: "I thirst!" the world had nothing for Him save a narcotic drink or vinegar. But He refused the narcotic drink, and from the sponge of vinegar He has cooled His burning lips. And with that drop of vinegar the world deemed that it had paid its toll of commiseration to the dying sufferer.

O, if Jesus were still hanging on the cross, and from His dying lips were heard the cry: "I thirst!", thousands would risk their lives to offer Him coolest water from purest and clearest wells.

So it would be now; now that the fruit of His death has operated and His own have been brought to Him.

But by nature such your irreconciled heart is not. If you had stood on Golgotha irreconciled even as those soldiers of Rome's emperor, you too would have thought, that it was quite enough, if you had refreshed with vinegar one guilty of death, who hung there to die.

First your Savior must suffer this mortal thirst and in that thirst caused by wound-fever die, to make you understand the sense of His atoning thirst.

And yet, who understands the depth of it? Who is there that perceives, that from this thirst of his Savior either he must drink in eternal life, or himself once perish eternally in his own unquenchable, hellish thirst?

Forget not, Isaiah speaks of a thirsty one "who *dreams,* and, behold, he drinketh; but when he awakes, behold, he is still faint, and his soul pants for water" (29:8).

And are there no people even now, who are in the church of God, and who *dream* that their eternal

thirst is quenched, and of whom it is still so terribly to be feared, that when once they shall awaken, their eternal thirst shall still be there and their soul shall languish with faintness?

XL.

ALL ACCOMPLISHED

THAT we would but turn back to the simplicity of God's Word!

It is so clearly put, it is so emphatically stated by Jesus Himself: everything must be accomplished, *that is written concerning Him in the Old Testament.* Only a moment before on the cross He gave up the ghost, John tells us, that "Jesus" knowing that all things were now accomplished, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled,* saith, I thirst! (19:28). And on the way to Emmaus, all along, Jesus' talk was a reproof of the slowness of mind and lack of understanding, by which the disciples had failed to discover in Moses and all the prophets, i. e. *in all the Old Testament,* the program of His suffering and dying.

Take nothing away from this!

Do not say, that, through all the Old Testament a lamentation is sounded of the "suffering that awaits the pious", and that in an eminent sense this has been verified in the Messiah.

Do not try to water this down to the symbolic thought, that all the Old Covenant is one lamentation about Israel's suffering, and that from the nature of the case Israel's lot was bound to reflect itself in the Messiah.

And seek far less still, from an amphibious standpoint, to give currency to the idea, that a "suffering Messiah" has truly been prophesied, in connection with the extirpation of our guilt, but, that this is no warrant that from this majestic idea you should

come down to the "particulars which in Gethsemane, which at Gabbatha and on Golgotha" are fulfilled.

Understand well, that by such assertions (by one as well as by the other) you contradict no one less than *Jesus Himself.*

To Jesus prophecy was truly in a very real sense a passion-*program.* A "program" in which His never wavering eye with absolute certainty has read before, seen and scrutinized the whole process of His sorrows and His revilings and His death, in the fixed colors and with the accurate outlines of the most awful reality.

Upon that prophetic page He saw Himself portrayed, as He was to be thrown down, trodden upon and crushed.

From that prophecy, after having made it plain to His own soul and with His own soul having willed and accepted it, He showed His disciples, not merely that He should suffer, but that He should suffer of the *high priests;* that they would deliver Him unto *the Gentiles*; that they would *mock* Him; *spitefully* entreat Him; *spit* on Him; *scourge* Him; and put Him *to death;* thus to clear the way to His resurrection the third day (Luke 18:31-33).

At every part of this majestic "passion-program", which in His tears and blood has been suffered and endured, He Himself declares or His disciples say, "that this also was done, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, in which it was foretold".

And when at length all the stations of the way of the cross have been trodden, and all these streams of most unending sorrows have been waded through, and all the parts of this Divine tragedy have been played to the end, with entire clear and transparent consciousness, knowing that "all things were now

accomplished", the Lord drinks the last drop also from that cup of suffering, which had been so scrupulously measured out to Him, and having done this, He gives up the ghost.

So it is! So it is written! Is it now so also by you confessed and believed?

"In the counsel and foreknowledge of God", not merely the general passion-idea, but everything that should happen, to the smallest detail was determined beforehand.

"Determined", that there should be no appearance even, that the Son of God's good pleasure for one moment, at one single reviling, or at one single stripe had been abandoned to the arbitrariness of sinners.

"Determined", that in Golgotha you should never suspect a power of corruption, which is superior to the Holy One, and that nothing should present itself there save an exhibition of the most dreadful evil serving as organ in the mightiness of the counsel of God.

"Determined", that instead of perplexing and confusing our souls, the cross of the Son of God should on the contrary be in our eyes a ratification of the Word of God.

"Determined", not least, that living through all this beforehand Christ should die a thousand deaths before He died, and thereby with clear consciousness, i. e., with moral will-power and surrender should struggle through a suffering, that was not haphazardly poured out upon Him, but one that had soberly and clearly been foreseen.

Is this too wonderful for God?

But, pray you, shall a mother, whose son is doomed to the martyrfire, be able in her fancies by

day and in her dreams by night, to live through everything that faces her child; be able and permitted to live through it and see as it were in advance the chains, the procession, the pyre, the fire and the stake, the executioners and the convulsions—and shall God Almighty, when He gives His only Beloved up unto death, *not* be permitted to be busy with it even to its particulars; *not* be allowed to see it in advance; to think it through; and shall He be obliged to satisfy Himself with a rough, outlineless image of the hour of darkness to come?

And if this is not so, and you realize that already at the creation and in the making of the covenant, for the sake of the love of the Divine good pleasure, Golgotha was the center of God's thoughts; that it could not fail but that God the Father should be busy with the suffering of His Son; yea, that with all His holy creating and animating activities ever and always again that cross in all its somber tints was bound to loom up before His holy eye—then, my brother, confess why should you still hesitate?

Does the Lord, according to your smallness, see only the "great outlines", without observing "the small"? I thought each hair of your head was numbered! And if so, are the thorns, that wounded that blessed Head unto blood, not numbered?

Has the Father in His foreknowledge seen all this sorrow and reviling, and was He forbidden or unable to *speak* of it?

And if He, speaking to and through His prophets, as you yourself confess, could not be silent regarding the Son, far less still regarding the "Lamb that is led to the slaughter", is it strange to you, that that Son, having become man, and opening that book of prophecy, should have found and read therein what

His Father in heaven in His eternal love, had suffered for Him beforehand, had planned regarding Him, had spoken of Him,—and do you not perceive with what full draughts, before He suffered, the Son drank in so tender a love, which especially in these small particulars shone forth so divinely, addressed Him so tenderly, and at His sinking caught Him underneath.

O, view it in this light: The *passion-prophecy in the Old Testament is a page from the sacred history of the love of the Father for the Son of His good pleasure,* and you see, all barrenness falls away, and you understand how Jesus was bound to cleave unto that Old Testament with His whole soul, and saw what stood written there, literally written there altogether coincide with the "will of God", so that "to accomplish everything", that *the Scripture,* and "to accomplish everything" that God's *counsel* might be fulfilled, was bound to be to His soul's perception one and the self-same thing!

And is it then not this to you?

XLI.

ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI!

TO SAY, that our Lord and Savior, dying on the cross, in His dreadful suffering and terror, *thought* of Psalm 22, and then repeated the "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" from this psalm, at heart destroys the Scripture and lowers the person of the Mediator.

And, on the contrary, to represent, that by His omniscience God had known beforehand, what words Jesus *would* utter on the cross, and on the ground of this knowledge should have had David write them down, transfers to God what would merely belong to human externality and reduces the work of the Holy Spirit to affected mechanism.

No, to let the Scripture be the divine work of the Holy Spirit, and Christ the eternal and true Witness, and so, likewise, to let God be truly God, everything affected and external must be eliminated from it, and in its higher, Divine naturalness it must all be understood.

Christ knew His suffering beforehand. Not because He had been informed, but from the nature of the case itself. Death is not something arbitrary, but from the reality of life itself the awful dreadfulness of death is determined. Determined also what the suffering of death is in its several stages, according as you sink in it less deeply or more deeply or reach its very bottom. Yea, determined even most minutely, what the tasting of death is, and how it differs with one and the other according to his less or more tender sensitiveness or to his less or more

vigorous consciousness of life or holier nature. And all this is determined, not by a certain external appointment, but by the character of Life, by the nature of Corruption, by the hellish depth of the unholiness of Death, and by the perfect sensitiveness and holiness of Jesus' absolute sinless humanity.

Thus Chist did not surmise, but knew what was to come; knew it most accurately and to the utmost particular; nothing remained uncertain.

And *from Paradise on* this Christ was the Inspirer of His church. It was this Christ, Who "in all her afflictions had been afflicted" and Who from of old had comforted His believers as the "Angel of His Presence".

This Christ, says the apostle Peter, also controlled prophecy. In that prophecy, by the Holy Spirit He portrayed Himself; told the story of His own life; fortold His own future; yea, made exhibition of Himself in shadows, so that by the external beauty of the Mediator, the Church of the Old Covenant through faith might be refreshed and justified.

The Scripture of the Old Covenant therefore does not merely speak *of* Him, but *it is He Himself* Who gave the Scripture of the Old Covenant its content, inspired it, brought it into being, and as a gift of grace presented it to His church.

And that Scripture He gave to her; not as an external jewel; but as Himself in that Scripture making His approach to her; in that Scripture showing Himself to her; a sending out beforehand of His likeness, if we may so put it, so long as He in His own person had not yet come.

And now Abraham and Moses, David and Solomon, Job and Isaiah, and whoever else you may name, are nothing but *instruments, which He creates,*

to bear the features of His likeness, to prepare the realization of this likeness, and even still to describe to us, who came after, all the excellencies and innumerable tendernesses of all His Mediatorial work.

That "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" on David's lips has thus been nothing, but a living through beforehand on the part of Christ of the bitter sorrow of soul, which was to come upon Him on Golgotha, and which by virtue of the fixed data of human nature and according to the fixed relations of the depths of death would have to come to that awful point in the last extremity, at which *of necessity* the terribly troubled cry of the "Eli, Lama Sabachthani" would be uttered.

And as it is sometimes granted unto us, who live *after* Golgotha, to bear the marks of the suffering of our Lord, so it was granted to a few elect under the Old Covenant *before* Golgotha, to bear those same marks in advance.

The Man of sorrows is beforehand imaged forth in the suffering servants of Jehovah.

But while a whole series of believers had obtained in advance those marks of the cross *in a measure,* in weak reflection, there was *one* man appointed of God, for whom this honor had been laid up in *highest completeness,* and *that* man was David.

David with whom took place these two things: *first* that he was thrown "in the lowest pit without water", and *again* that when he poured out his bitter complaint of personal suffering, the Holy Spirit chose him as organ for the revelation of the suffering of the Messiah, and, deepening infinitely the voice of his complaint, elicited *by* inspiration from *his* lips that cry of utter forsakenness, which

not by inspiration, but through the reality once *must* come across the lips of the Messiah.

Thus from the *living-through-beforehand* of Golgotha the soul's complaint in Psalm 22 is born, and Christ, on Golgotha, Himself uttering from His soul this cry of hellish pain, repeated nothing after some one else and recited nothing by rote, but tore out of His own succumbing soul, what according to the dreadfulness of His death and the infinite depth of His apperception at that moment with absolute necessity *had* to come from His lips.

He, the eternal Word, the Son of God, was man, was flesh, was become like unto us, in all things, sin alone excepted.

In the most intimate and tenderest way He had united our human nature with His divine nature. Nothing, how could it be, was taken from His Deity, and yet from tender compassion, He ordains it, in a way incomprehensible to us, that this human nature shall remain inviolately human, so that we should be able truly to testify: Yea, He is our flesh indeed! He is become as one of us.

And being thus, He has entered into what is ours. Into our deep misery; into our sinful and corrupted life; into this heap of rubbish, which we call world; into this ruin, which we call our human life; treading this dreadful, undermined and underexcavated ground, beneath which hides the volcano of hell. And from this hell the vapor of death ascended, full of the wrath of God to rest heavily as lead upon all that human life, and to consume it in curse and death.

And while every one else avoided this, shrank from before it, and by God's wondrous grace still had shelters in which for a while to withdraw them-

selves from this awful, killing destruction, *He had to enter into it; willingly* He must *seek* it; must concentrate all this upon Himself; must not rest, until the *deepest* and *bitterest* of that death was tasted.

Of that Death, i. e., also of the dying, and this not understood of the dying as we see it, but of that dying, with its eternal deep pit underlying it, with its hellish pain, in which it ends, and with all the wrath of God against the unholy, that cleaves to and in that death.

Death, that is what *reacts against the Life,* and the Life is God; hence death is an enemy of God; death is what puts God aside; death is sin; all sin; and God, because He is the Life can not do other than burn eternally with wrath against sin and death.

And though you will never be able to solve and never can explain it, this is certain: Your Savior *has* tasted death, or He has *not* tasted death.

If not, where, O, children of the Kingdom, is then your hope?

But, if so, then tell me, you who call yourself redeemed, *what* death has your Savior borne for you? Only the death of passing out of the body? and *not* likewise the death in its depth, in its hellish pain, in its fulness of God's wath?

Woe be unto you, for then from this you are *not* redeemed; *then you will still have to bear this yourself!*

Impossible, is it not, for then He were to you no Savior!

Thus all this He bore for you.

That *real* death He has tasted.

That death, in its eternal depth, with its hellish pain, as summary of all God's wrath!

But can such a death be tasted, really, not in semblance, but tasted, without feeling oneself one awful moment separated from the *Life?*

Do not quarrel about this. Do not render unholy what is most holy. But believe, worship and give thanks for such inimitable, for such unsearchable compassion.

So it stood: You or He in that unspeakable pain of the depth of death and of Godforsakennesses!

Then spake He: I in your stead, O, my redeemed one!

And then He *was* forsaken, and God's angels caught up the *Lama Sabachthani* from His lips!

To what purpose?

That you should never more be forsaken of God, and should once eternally be with Him.

And this from pure compassion.

XLII.

MADE TO BE SIN FOR US

SIN is as oil on paper, which always spreads farther, always penetrates deeper. It is a cancer that can not rest, but must eat on. And this process of sin in and about you shall only cease when nothing more remains into which sin is able to enter.

Sin attacks not only the root of your life; it did not merely push its way through into your nature; it did not merely poison your personal existence; but from out these centers it continues its path along every direction of your existence and of your life; and there is nothing about you or in you, be it in your heart or in your head, in your feeling or your will, in your conscience or your imagination, in any talent or any gift, in any taste or sense or inclination, in pleasure or aversion, but sin stands ready to take everything in its employ, to communicate its polution to it, to corrupt it and to transpose it into an instrument of Satan.

Yea, even piety, the best, the noblest trait we still have, even our piety sin attacks to transmute it into shameful hypocrisy and to corrupt it into progressive Phariseism.

And you can think of nothing so fine in your person, in your environment, in the sphere of your life, yea, in the deepest and tenderest of your mind and heart, but sin stands ready to corrupt even that finest quality and to turn it into sin.

Once more, it can not rest, until your whole person is satiated with sin.

Only when everything in you shall have become sin, will Satan let go of you.

But that shall never be, for this is sin's eternal business. This will be hell for the lost, that in them every resistance in behalf of good shall be overmastered and will-less and defenceless they must forever see, and forever tolerate, that sin devours their soul, eats out their heart and poisons their lifeblood.

Satan himself has altogether become sin, and the punishment of hell shall be no other, than eternally to get farther away from God and to make closer approach to the Devil.

Here on earth we are exhorted: "Seek fellowship with God!", and he who will not do this, must once have eternal fellowship with Satan.

To live near unto God!—or once eternally unto Satan; to dwell ever nearer to the Evil one and make approach to him, there is no other choice.

Do you now understand what it means, that "Jesus is made to be sin for you"? (2 Cor. 5:21).

What you too, in case you are lost, shall eternally be engaged to become; so to be given to sin, that there is nothing of you save sin; this is what Jesus is made, He the Holy One of God.

You were lost. Lost because sin ever festered in you. And this festering would steadily progress till it reached that dreadful point, at which you yourself would be nothing but sin. No longer a sinner, but one who has become *one* with sin; identified with sin; lost in sin; so that your very person is gone, and nothing remains to and in you but sin.

In the manner of a plant that becomes stone.

One often sees in a quarry how a plant that is

gradually overpowered by the nature of stone, gradually hardens and stiffens; how at length it begins to lose its vegetable nature and to take on the nature of stone; till at last the whole plant disappears, and no more mention is possible of organic life, and nothing remains but a mass of stone glued to the rock.

So it is with the sinner.

He was placed in the midst of sin, and now sin begins to assimilate him, to make him like unto itself and to transpose him into its own character. This goes very slowly. For as long as a man still remains himself, he struggles against it. The sinner is not yet sin, but is a man who, outwinged by sin, is drawn towards it and is gradually changed into its dreadful nature and hardened. And when at last this dreadful process were ended, man would be destroyed, and nothing of what once was a man would remain save a mass of sin.

And that is what Jesus is made for you. (2 Cor. 5:21).

"Sinner" Jesus never was. This He could not be. To be a sinner He would have had to let sin enter into the sanctuary of His personal existence, and that Jesus *never* did and *could* not do. Then He would have ceased to be God, and God, as the apostle teaches with so great emphasis, can not deny Himself.

But He Who never could be a sinner, is for the sake of sinners Himself made to be *sin*. With His soul He has sunk away into that uttermost and most terrible state, in which we cease to offer resistance, and allow ourselves to be devoured alive by sin, till at length nothing deeper nor more dreadful nor

more gruesome was left in the hellish depth of sin. And that altogether essentially sinful character He has not thrust away from Him, but has taken it up into Himself, placed Himself under it, borne it; till at length not *one* sinner could be sunken away so deeply, or could have wandered off so far and be so utterly lost, but that Jesus was certain that that one's sin also was included in the sin which for our sakes He bare.

And when He thus went down into the uttermost depth of sin, so that He in very deed arrived close by Satan and now was utterly forsaken of God, He ever yet remained the Holy One of God, in that He, from sheer obedience to the Father and from love to His elect, allowed Himself to be involved to the very uttermost in the dreadful nature of sin. Thus, far from ever having been a sinner Himself, He proved Himself to be the Holy One most in this, that He allowed Himself altogether to be made sin.

But therefore there is also no semblance, no, nothing but full uprightness in Jesus, when He is made to be sin.

He must needs go down into that depth of sin, not that He might enjoy it, but that He might destroy it; not to have part in it, but as a foreign terrible power to attack it; yea, it would have become sin in Him, if thus He had not allowed Himself wholly to be made sin.

Wholly, thus also with the assumption of the *guilt* that rested upon sin, for the very neutralization of that guilt and of the wrath of God resting upon that guilt, was His aim.

That guilt could not be taken away, except He first enter into the fellowship with that sin, from

which that guilt was born and ever continued to be born.

The wrath of God had to be borne, not against any particular *sin,* but against sin itself; against the nature of sin; more still; against the unholy lack of reality, that had entered into and penetrated our human race. In the full sense of the word, the wrath of God that burned against the sin of the whole human race. For our whole race dies of one guilt; the motherguilt of the root-sin, once in Paradise committed by the Covenanthead of us all against God.

Hence it does not go by count, as though one might say: there are ten million elect, and each elect has ten million sins. Now multiply these together and you get the number of the sins which Jesus has borne on the wood.

No, spiritual things are not so external as that. They do not go by count or by number. All sins flow from one source; the guilt of all has sprung from one guilt. And now Jesus has attacked that source, that root-guilt He has taken away; thus in all reality bearing the wrath of God which was kindled against the sin of our whole human race.

Thus nothing must, nothing could remain in the nature of sin, from which Jesus withdrew Himself, else He would not have saved a single one of His elect.

For you yourself, according to your own confession, as child of the Kingdom, know far better than the impenitent, how you with your own person are rooted deeply in the essence (nature) of sin; that there is nothing in sin, of which you can say, "This was outside of me"; and that not merely for your committed sins, far less for your conscious sins,

but much more for sin in the absolute sense, you stand guilty before God.

And therefore there is no comfort, there can be no peace for your soul, no acquittal, no salvation, before you hear God declare it, and with warm thankfulness for so great a compassion you accept it, that your Savior, your Surety and your Mediator has so taken upon Himself *the whole sin,* the nature *itself* of sin, that He is made *to be sin* for you, and that through this spiritual miracle of miracles the righteousness became yours, which was laid up for you in Jesus.

XLIII

FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT

GOLGOTHA, when the cross was planted there, on which Jesus suffered and died, has been fathomed by no one who stood by, not one of those who were pesent there has in the least understood it in its deep significance.

Execution of capital punishment was common in those times; crucifixion was even a frequent occurrence. You know that on the day when Jesus died His bitter death, Pilate put no less than two others with Him to the cross.

Consequently to see such an execution the curious and idle populace would go out of the city gate, while the rank and file of the people of Jerusalem paid no attention to it.

That nevertheless when Jesus was led to the crosshill, so large a multitude went along, and even a small group of priests mingled among the crowd, and a few of His disciples in anxiety and astonishment of soul followed from afar, shows very plainly that at this time people saw something special in the execution that was about to take place. Thus an impression prevailed about Golgotha of something extraordinary, which was presently deepened by the holy nobility of soul that was shown by the Crucified, and finally, by the fear-inspiring signs, which at the cross overtook the bystanders.

Even the officer of the Roman army, who stood watch at the cross and was in command, could in the end not free himself from this overpowering

impression; and his cry after Jesus was dead: "Truly, this was the Son of God", shows how strongly even this hardened soldier was moved.

Hence it would be a mistake to imagine that on that dreadful afternoon of wickedness everything took an *ordinary* course.

Rather everything on Golgotha bore this time a very uncommon character. A certain dread of something mysterious and strange took possession of every heart. And doubtless it was a relief, when at last everything was "accomplished"; and the light of the sun returned; and with the return of the light Jesus was seen, with the pale color of death upon His face and person, and the head impotently hanging down upon the breast, dead.

Then fear was removed from many a heart. For, as it was thought, now that He was dead, Jerusalem and the troubled multitudes, had nothing more to fear, at least not *from Him.*

But though in this way the cross on Golgotha on that Friday before Easter violently moved the hearts of the people in Jerusalem, threw restlessness upon them, and by a mysterious fear made the multitude afraid, that cross and that dying was not understood in its depths by any one there, much less was it comprehended in its far-reaching significance.

Not even by a Mary and by a John.

This you observe on Easter-morn.

For even when they heard that Jesus was risen from the dead, His disciples did not understand the secret of salvation, and they stood before a riddle, the solution of which escaped them.

What in reading Isaiah 63 involuntarily you apply to Jesus, that He "has trodden the winepress alone,

and that of the people there was none with Him", intends by no means to say merely, that His disciples fled and turned their back upon Him, but has a far deeper sense.

On Golgotha has happened far more, than any *one* of the bystanders surmised. In Jesus' death struggle, a conflict has been fought, which He alone knew, and of which He alone had knowledge, and which He has fought to the finish, without the surmisal of such a conflict suggesting itself, even to a John.

In the suffering and dying of Jesus there was something that appeared in the foreground, something that was evident, and which consequently every one could observe; but also an entirely other something, and much more, took place in the *background,* which as behind a curtain remained hidden, and which could be understood by no one there, whose eye was not opened, to peer through the folds of that curtain.

What one saw was the convulsion of one, who had been sentenced to die, who in the bitterness of the death struggle, at last from sheer exhaustion succumbed and expired. But what one did *not* see, was the dreadful conflict of the Mediator of God and men with the eternal Death, His writhing in anguish of soul to extricate Himself from Satan, His succumbing under the weight of the wrath of God.

Later on the eyes of His apostles have been opened to this. And Paul, and Peter, and John have vied as it were to bind it upon the heart of Christ's church. And no child of God, but has at length understood at least something of that "being forsaken of God that we of God should never be forsaken". But *at the time* no one understood it. No

one but He, Who Himself fought it through. No one save Jesus alone.

What the multitude, and His disciples, saw of it and understood of it, was a small part of the matter. A single drop of the full cup. The outward form, in which the suffering showed itself. But of the real, of the actual, of what was above everything else so awful in this dying, they perceived nothing.

They saw the dying, but not the actual conflict with Satan, and with that eternal Death, the violence of which was in Satan's hand.

They saw much sin in the revilings of those priests, in the roughness of some of those bystanders, in the cruelty of the soldiers; but they saw nothing of *the sin of the world* which had been laid on Jesus, and which Jesus bore.

Above all else they clearly saw, that God from heaven did not deliver Jesus from the cross, but, that in that terrible moment, all the *wrath of God* centered itself upon Him, and that under this and under this alone, He succumbed—no one of them surmised, and no one saw. Friend nor enemy had any thought of this. This, Jesus alone understood, and Jesus alone endured.

Something which naturally even now has no hold upon your heart, when to you Satan is merely a *name,* death merely a falling asleep, and the "sin of the world" little less than a shortcoming in holiness, and the wrath of God merely a figurative manner of speech.

But then also, something, the dreadfulness of which goes though your bone and marrow, the moment you personally recognize in Satan your *mightiest enemy;* when death is become to you *the power of corruption;* when under the sin of the world, and

therefore under your own sin, as under *a burden,* which weighs your soul down and distresses it, you have labored; and above all when the *wrath of God* has appeared to you in that terrible reality, which has made you feel in your own soul, that under the woe and the weight of that wrath of your God you must eternally be undone.

Then the terrible fact, that in one moment of time by that anger of Satan, by that horror of Death, by that curse of sin, and by the wrath of God, Jesus was overwhelmed as by a destructive flood, and was swallowed up by it, becomes to you something so altogether different from that outward dying on the cross, that you would almost forget that cross, that you might concentrate all the seriousness and all the attention of your loving soul upon that deeper suffering, and to become amazed, as often as again from that mysterious dark background of Golgotha the plaintive cry sounds in your ears: *"O, all ye, that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger."*

But, alas, on the way that runs back of the visible, and crosses the fields of the spirit, even now so few pass by.

Almost every one walks on the foreside, and also at Golgotha has no eye except for what the bodily eye sees, and ear save for what the bodily ear hears.

Only those among the Lord's people who are more deeply initiated have any desire to take that dark way across the background, where in so heart-breaking and soul-lacerating a manner they hear their Mediator moan.

Very few have the courage to pursue that way though the darknesses to the end.

And when that conflict with eternal Death took place, there was literally *no one* who dared to follow the Mediator in that bitter way. In that awful wilderness of eternal Death no one was with Him. Into the deepest abyss of Death He went down alone.

He, Immanuel, for us sinners, that we should never sink away into that eternal Death.

And therefore in the most crucial moment, when at last the gate of the eternal Death opened before Him and He was to sink away in it, His cry for compassion is not to any child of man, not to Peter with His defenceless sword, not to John with his shortcoming love.

Even Mary, Jesus had dismissed from the cross.

No, in this dreadful moment, when He had already put one foot on the threshold of the gate of Death, and presently this awful gate was to close itself behind Him, all that passed from His soul across His lips, was a last cry to Above, a cry to His God, under Whose wrath He was sinking away, seeking a refuge with His Father, in the dying outcry: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Breath was still in Him, the soul was still in the blood, He felt Himself still alive, but life was ebbing. He felt succumbency approach. One moment more, and the breath of life would fail Him, to let His consciousness set in the night of Death.

And, in that moment, when He could no longer hold on to life, and felt it slip away from Him, He *gave* that breath, that life, that spirit which was passing from Him, over to His God.

Father, when the spirit of my life passes from me, let my soul be safe in thy hand.

Dying-word of confidence. Prophecy of resurrection.

I die away under the sin of the world, but God shall hold fast my life, and once He shall give it back to me.

Thus, before He died away in the eternal Death, was His last prayer on earth. And truly that importuning prayer of Jesus could not remain unanswered.

When Jesus sank away in Death, God held fast to His life. Though He sank away, in the hands of the Father the life of our Savior was indestructible.

He succumbed and still He continued to be, for though His God in anger had forsaken Him, in His eternal love, His Father held His life immovably fast, and no one could snatch it out of the hand of His Omnipotence.

More still. In that prayer Jesus as Head of the Body prayed for all His redeemed.

When presently, having come to the end of your life, you feel the damp shadow of death settle upon you; and you feel the warmth of life withdraw itself from your blood, and the breath of life from your lips; and dying you commend your spirit into your Father's hands, this also is a fruit of the cross of Golgotha, a fruit of what upon that cross Jesus has prayed in your behalf.

XLIV.

THOU LAYEST ME IN THE DUST OF DEATH

WHEN man had not as yet been created, inanimate dead dust lay on the ground. The Omnipotent God took a handful of this dust, and again a handful, and from it shaped a human figure, with bone and muscle, with blood and nerve. It was altogether wisdom, strength and beauty, which He infused into this inanimate dust. When the human body was thus prepared, God created the soul in it, to which the body was disposed. In this way through God's almightiness there arose this wondrous, and artistically articulated complex of spirit and dust; and what in Paradise stood erect, and for the first time looked around and observed and listened was *man*, as he had been created by God.

So man was nothing but dust, with the addition of the wisdom and almightiness of God, which had inworked creatively upon that dust.

So long as this selfsame almightiness held and maintained him in that dust as man, he remained as he was. But should God let go of him, or he of God, what could become of him again other than dust?

And, therefore, when in his pride man dared to do this, and cut the tie that bound him to God, the curse followed: "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return, for out of it wast thou taken!" (Gen. 3: 19).

By reason of this, the last breath and the youngest sob, do not end all. No, the humiliation must go further. He who abandons God must return to the state in which he was before God called him into

being and created him. So, after we have breathed our last, there is a grave to receive us into its bosom.

Then the earth opens itself. The ground above which God's almightiness gave us standing; which we have trodden with our foot; over which we have exercised kingly rule; and which now avenges itself, and awaits our return to it, that it might rule over us.

The grave dissolves, consumes, devours the body. And there is no rest, until it again becomes, what originally it was; *nothing but dust.*

This now the Messiah has also felt beforehand and has suffered this through in advance, when the Holy Spirit drove David to write the passion-psalm, and he sang of that most bitter death on the cross, and, of sinking down into the shame of the grave, as he complained: "O, my God, *Thou layest me in the dust of death!*"

With us this goes by stages. First we are sick; then we die; and then we are lowered into the grave. But to the mind of the Messiah it was one continuous line of humiliation and destruction *to and into the grave.* One stirring up of *the dust of death,* that would choke Him.

Dust and Spirit stand one over against the other.

Dust is what was formless, inanimate from the hour when the earth was still waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The Spirit had then not as yet entered creatively into the dust to animate it. The Spirit of God was still brooding upon the face of the waters.

But at God's command that Spirit entered into the dust; and so came the life of all creation, till at length it received its crown in man.

So dust was to serve the Spirit, as the Spirit is called to animate and to rule the dust.

Till a breach comes into that spiritual life. For then the wheel of birth shifts. It turns about. Power is then restored to the dust, and everything goes back to what was "waste and void". Everything again becomes dust.

And into this terrible destruction also the Messiah must enter.

As Mediator appointed in the eternal Decree, it was His lot to marry the weal and the woe of our human race. Once, the glory to which it was called; but first the corruption to which it was doomed.

He was to take our nature upon Him; but in its fallen and undone state. As it lay under the doom of sinking away into death and grave and of returning unto dust. And to this course and lot the Messiah had to subject Himself, that having sunk into the furrow of death, He with the Spirit might battle against the dust, and in the grave itself fetter the dust by His resurrection.

This was the final point to which it must come. This the deepest depth in which He had to sink away. And only when this depth of contemptuousness had been reached, with the deeply repressed adaptability of the Spirit, He would gloriously triumph over the grave that willed to destroy also Him.

The dust had no power over Jesus. In psalm 16, the note of hope had rung: "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption". And that note of hope became prophecy.

With Jesus it has gone the length to the separation of soul and body. Even His separated body has been laid in the grave. But further than this it did not

come. Dust could *not* destroy the body; could *not* consume it; His body did not become dust!

Jesus was laid in the dust of death. Enclosed in a tomb. Enclosed behind a door of stone. But in the conflict which then followed, dust suffered defeat. The Spirit of life overcame and the dust of death was overcome.

Now also it went down to the root.

As in Adam the root of our race has been broken and has been abandoned to the power of the dust, for which reason every one of us must pay the toll of dissolution to the dust, so was the course of action here. In Christ *the root* of the new life has triumphed, and in Him, all that is attached to that root, triumphs over the dust.

It must have been dreadful for the Mediator, before He could triumph, to sink away into that depth for our sakes.

He bemoans it with a tone, in which echoes the woefulness of heart: "Thou layest me in the dust of death!"

And yet, in this word spake also confidence.

He was taken captive by that dust, but *God laid Him in it.*

It was only the development, unfolding, and result of the eternal Decree. Of that same Decree, which also included His triumph. For this reason, this deeply sorrowful psalm (22), before it is halfway through, turns into the tone of praise and jubilation; "Ye, that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel!"

In this lay the power for the Messiah to struggle through to the end.

Nothing comes to Him by chance. Nothing overtakes Him by the power of nature or of sin. Even in His bitterest suffering, He is for no single moment out of God's hand.

God's Spirit drives Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil; presently, it is the same Father-hand which puts the cup, the terrible cup of eternal death, to His lips.

He does not fall into the dust of death, *God lays Him in it.*

And so in His sinking away lies the prophecy of His ascension on high.

It is all the carrying out of the one passion-program, but in God's decree, immediately after the passion-program follows the program of glory and triumph.

Through suffering to glory!

The gate of the Lord, through which He is to pass that He might enter into the glory, that awaits Him.

This, for the Mediator, was His only comfort in life and in death, for soul and for body.

And God's child on earth well knows, that, coming after Jesus, in this he finds all his rest, in this the courage to bear and to tolerate, in this alone, in the midst of densest darkness, the strength of spirit to grasp the light, that though immersed in deepest sorrows, he may know: This is not by chance, neither is it brought upon me by any man. For *Thou, Lord, Thou alone layest me in the dust of death.*

XLV.

BECAUSE HE HATH POURED OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH

IF UNTIL DEATH, and still more in dying, you expect comfort for your heart from Golgotha's cross, you may well embrace that wondrous cross with both hands.

The power by which the world tries to draw you away from that cross has become incredibly great; and what in our earlier life, still drove at least the piously disposed soul to Golgotha, has more and more lost almost all influence.

Time was, not very long ago, when the very name of Golgotha was held in common esteem as the name of the most sacred spot on earth. The simple mention of that name stirred the innermost perception of our heart in holy motion. In whatever quarter the scorner would cool his malice, he left Golgotha to itself. That was too impressive. Had he attacked Golgotha, it would not have been well with him.

Among more seriously-minded people, this vague impression was not all. Even unconsciously you were brought under the influence of that holy name. In all such circles the cross was the "sign of life", the symbol of our confession, the central point, from which all higher emotion came to us, and towards which every nobler outbreathing of our soul returned. That cross was highly exalted in preaching and address, in prayer, in song, in image, and in writing. Yea, one did not merely hear about the cross, but the soul dwelt at that cross. There was no intimate association with almost any one, but you

soon observed that at times he too could not refrain from forgetting everything else, to think of Golgotha alone.

So was the cross of Golgotha dominant in thought, in conviction of soul, in life.

Though even then there was no lack of sinful influences, to draw you away from the man of sorrows, there was much in your daily surroundings that drew you to Golgotha and pointed you to that cross.

How different all this has become!

By taking the fathomless deep mystery out of Golgotha, and by speaking of the Martyr who sealed his conviction with his blood, unfaithful preachers of the Gospel have committed treason against the Holiest, and have even extinguished the halo of light in which these many centuries the thorn-crowned Head of your Savior has been lustrous before all eyes.

It was said, that by so doing they made Jesus more human; that they brought Him within a nearer range to your intelligence; that so He would gain immensely in the admiration of all hearts.

But the outcome has proved otherwise.

Every people, every religion, every idolatry, has furnished martyrs for their conviction, and no system has been thought out, so hellish, so devilish, all the way to Anarchism and Nihilism, but was able to inspire men and women to the martyr-death.

In the mystery of Atonement, Jesus stood unique. He alone, and no one with Him. But when treacherous preaching in His own church had *reduced* Him to a martyr, He was *one of many;* there were even

those that had undergone a far more awful death than He.

And of course, when in His own church this treason had been committed against the Man of sorrows, with unholy fervor the world has followed after.

"Jesus the martyr" has become the magic watchword to deliver her from the urge of the cross.

So it became as a melting of snow before the rising sun, and presently .... a running down as of very rapid waters.

Soon men boldly named the blessed name of your Savior with that of Mahomed, Confucius and Buddha. All these were mighty figures. Benefactors of mankind.

That was it: Jesus also had done well, and with Him heroes of thought like a Kant and a Hegel.

So the holy form of the Lamb of God was brought down to the ordinary proportions of celebrated men.

Terrible!

And to this it was bound to come. For, men had no more knowledge of guilt, they no longer believed in a doom. And what sensible man would now speak of the blood of Golgotha as *the ransom for our sins?*

So in the end it has proved true, that *faith,* by which the soul that thirsts after redemption embraces the cross of Golgotha, is *no* common good, does not proceed from our nature, but is *a gift of the grace of God.*

For, truly, there are still thousands upon thousands, who, undismayed by this treason against Jesus and unmoved by this general apostacy, quietly and childlike continue to glory in that cross of Jesus as in the mystery into which angels desire to look;

but in the heart of all these *this faith* owes its origin to a special *grace*, and has always been maintained by this special *grace* alone.

Self-exaltation therefore by reason of this faith is highly unbecoming.

You do not have it of yourself. As far as you are concerned, you would have put it from you as well as the others. You are no better than they. It would be a new sin to you, a sin which as a worm would gnaw on your faith, if instead of offering unto God unfeigned thanks, you were to ascribe honor to yourself; as though *your* faithfulness, *your* courage, *your* enthusiasm maintained the remembrance of, and the attachment to Golgotha.

On the contrary, where in the selfsame shipwreck you were threatened to perish with the others, deeper self-effacement becomes you, and a more ardent and full acknowledgement of forfeited grace; and in case your near and dear ones hold fast to that cross with you, you do not realize, how vastly rich you are in the mercy you have been granted.

Not that therefore by much arguing you should try to unveil the mystery of Golgotha.

A mystery can not be dissected, and when you undertake to do this, it dies away under your hand.

Not with cool argumentative thinking, but in worship, *with the warmth of your heart* you must turn to that mystery of Atonement, or else the grace which hides in it withholds from you its blessing.

It will not avail you even, that you feel yourself *lost,* and, that you may be saved you kneel down at the cross; for wanting to be saved is always yet selfishness, so long as that desire to be saved has no *higher end* in view.

To be saved for whom? For what? Why?

Merely *not* to go down eternally into never-ending woe? Merely, if it were possible, to taste an existence full of high enjoyment? But what is this else, save to desire everything, even the cross of Golgotha, *for your own self's sake!*

No, this, without more, is not yet religion, is not yet fruit of godliness.

See, when the hero in the field of battle on horseback plunges forward toward victory, and suddenly his steed is shot, and grievously wounded, this brave animal, if it could speak, would express its desire to be healed of its wound, not that it itself might graze in pasture again, but that it might again *carry its rider and render victory possible for him.*

And so likewise thirst after salvation all holy and humble men of heart.

For God's sake, not for ours, salvation must come. Not we, but God has been robbed by sin. And, therefore, not to ourselves but to God must we be given back.

So operates not selfishness, but *love.*

And it is this *consuming* love alone, which harnessed in holy passion, drives out to Golgotha; offers worship at Golgotha; gives thanks for Golgotha; and carries away the full divine blessing of Reconciliation from Golgotha.

And though for him who thinks and lives at all intensely there remain a thousand perplexing problems which storm the heart; of riddles insolvable; of questions to which comes no answer; of contradictions which make your spirit reel; here in the mystery of Golgotha your battle-worn soul finds rest.

Not, because it enables you to give "a wise

answer" to all those questions, but because it embraces all these questions in this one fact, in this one impenetrable wondrous event, that He, Who came from God and Himself was God, has poured out His soul unto death.

Deeper thought there is none. You can not join together in simpler language the mightiest antitheses of heaven and of earth.

Every other question that held your attention pales in significance by the side of that Son of God, Who is *Himself God,* and *Who has poured out His soul unto death.*

And to believe this fact, to confess *this* event without equal; to enter into it with your whole soul; and then blessedly to experience, that it does *not* offend you; that, on the contrary, your soul loses itself in it; that from it rest breathes out towards you; that from it holy peace takes possession of you; and that at that cross you have reached the zenith, from whence with free outlook you gaze upon eternity,—that is the Amen, which is spoken in your human heart in response to the mystery of Golgotha; and against which no scorn and no doubt can avail a thing.

But thus *spiritually* the worship of this mystery must conduct itself in you.

From afar, at a distance, to admire that cross *can* make no blessed feeling to course through the heart.

The blessing of that cross flows for him alone who has lost himself in that cross.

XLVI.

BRUISE THE HEAD

SATAN in Scripture assumes the image of a serpent, which steals along behind you, which moves noiselessly after you, and from behind stings you in the heel with its poisonous fangs.

That is the crafty cunning of the treacherous waylayer. To wound you, mortally to wound you, before you can be aware of the need of defense.

And over against this stands the Christ, Who goes directly after Satan, seeks him out, attacks him in front and gives him such a mortal blow *on the head,* that the vanquished serpent stretches out its curled body in death.

With judgment Zion was to be redeemed; not by craftiness or cunning. And as the ungrateful and reckless child of man had thrown himself into the arms of Satan, in the work of redemption the Mediator would honor the right, be it even the right of that satanic serpent. He would not attack him from behind, but face to face with him He would bruise his head, so that in the end Satan himself would have to acknowledge that he had been vanquished by our Avenger in lawful conflict.

Therefore the Mediator does not hide from before Satan. After He is baptized in the Jordan, He is at once driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, that He might be tempted of the Devil.

When it comes to that temptation, the Mediator does not repel Satan with divine superior power, but struggles with the Evil One according to the rules of combat. Weapon against weapon. Scrip-

ture against Scripture. Till finally Satan ends the combat with that holy weapon, and leaves Him for a season.

When afterwards Satan sows dissention among the disciples, Jesus in Peter attacks Satan again with open visor. When He knows that Satan is about to enter into Judas, He does not draw Himself back, but gives Judas the last sop. And when finally it comes to Gethsemane and Golgotha, the struggle and emotion of soul is truly dreadful above all description, but even in this crucial hour He bravely meets that Cup and that Prince of the world.

He was come "to destroy the works of the Devil", and He broke his power, and from on high still battles that His church shall not be prevailed against by the gates of hell. Yea, once the day shall dawn, when with all His saints He shall engage in the last conflict against Satan and his satellites, and ultimately cast Satan into the abyss, where, with his bruised head, he shall lie forever at the bottom of hell.

The head of Satan must be bruised. And though in person Satan is incorporeal and therefore has no head, yet it is clear what "head" here means. Our head is the seat of *our consciousness.* From the brain come deliberations and thoughts. Truly, in connection with surgings from the heart; but, in the head they assume the form of searchings, deliberations and attempts.

In Satan's head was schemed the *evil purpose.* From his head the *lie* went forth, which inimically stood over against *the truth.* With his head he swelled in pride to vie with God Himself.

Therefore Satan must be trampled *on the head.*

Because he is the father of *lies,* the Mediator must crush him by the *truth.*

And so the Mediator comes, to place over against the brood of Satan's lies and the fabrications of his evil intents, the holy, pure, clear, heavenly *truth;* and to declare the Divine decree.

Do not say therefore, that "truth is of less account; that first and more and permanently it depends alone upon "holiness"; and that such a Savior is sufficient, Who wondrously imparts to us a holier sense, a holier life.

This is to subvert God's ordinances. To subvert the whole order of salvation. To subvert the awful course of history.

No, from the *head* of Satan, through the *lie,* sin has come into the world, and only from the Head of the Mediator, through the *truth,* can power go forth into the world, which breaks the power of Satan.

In the wilderness the Mediator combats Satan *through the Word.*

That Word is a hammer which breaks the rocks in pieces. The double-edged sword that pierces even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. The Word always leads the van.

And naturally from the *truth* proceeds "holiness", even as from the *lie* "sin" was generated.

But Satan can not succumb, except as by Him Who is the Truth, he is *trampled on the head.*

Watch therefore not merely over your heart, but also over your head.

Also upon what you think, what you believe, what your conviction, what your confession is, it all depends. It depends upon this with you, and also

with the whole church of God. Also in our schools. And also in the training of the family.

We have thoughts, and the rising generation also has conceptions and ideas, by which it lives.

If it is nothing to you, whether young people foster healthy ideas, pure conceptions, and true representations, Satan takes good care from the evil heart and the wicked world to inspire them with unhealthy ideas, impure conceptions and untrue representations. And on these your own soul feeds; on these feed the souls of your children; on these feed your kindred and your people; and in the end, Satan wields a terrible power, against which an accessorial Bible class or an accessorial church attendance avails so little.

We are in conflict *with the head* of Satan; with his false insinuations; with his seemingly beautiful practice of raising expectations; with the seeds of sinful thoughts, which he sows within us.

And therefore Jesus said: "The Truth shall make you free." Every drop of truth that enters into you, is an antidote against what ideas crept into you from Satan's head. Every true, pure representation is a power, with which to break again a band of Satan.

Satan knows full well the power of pure, unadulterated, healthy truth, and therefore in all ages he is bent on nothing so much as on falsifying *Truth* by all sorts of heresies in the church, in the family of believers, and in the training of the rising generation.

Heretical truth is still truth, but it is as a lion whose teeth have been drawn. It is powerless, and by its false admixture it does harm.

No discipline in your church; no discipline in your education; no discipline over yourself; this is as Satan gladly wills it. In this grows his strength,

in this flourishes his power. For in all ages error has been the fruitful mother of unbelief, apostacy and moral corruption.

And therefore in His conflict Christ calls on you to take part with Him, and to struggle with Him, in bruising the head of Satan.

He has bruised Satan's head, but with and under Him you must fight the little heads of the demons, which in all sorts of ways find entrance into your heart and life.

For truly it does not avail, that in every way you despise and stigmatize moral evil. The demoniac spirit is a power which even as the serpent in the fable, ever grows again, so long as the head is not found and crushed.

So it is in your heart and in the heart of your children.

No conflict avails, neither does it hit the mark, so long as the head of the demon in your heart is not attacked and broken.

Only when the head is bruised, is the power of the demon ended.

All victory therefore begins with *faith,* and ever proceeds from *faith*; for faith flings away the head of the demon that dwells within, and over against the lie of Satan, bears witness to the truth as it is in Jesus.

XLVII.

AND THE EARTH DID QUAKE

NATURE also has given signs, when the Savior of the world was cast out by the world, and on the cross gave up the ghost.

All sorts of signs are reported. At midday, suddenly a black darkness fell, which lasted hours together. The earth quaked, and the rocks rent. And as a result of this, the temple of Zion trembled on its foundations, so that the veil was rent, and graves were opened and appearances of the dead were seen.

And as a second result is stated, that the centurion who commanded the watch at the cross, at the sight of these signs was so greatly moved, that he exclaimed: Truly this was a son of God, the Son of a God, a superhuman Being!

We would almost say, that such an outburst in nature was bound to come.

He Who here died was the Mediator between God and men, and as such the eternal Word, through Whom all things in heaven and on earth have been created. The apostle John goes out from that creation of heaven and earth by the Word, to bring us directly from Creation to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Golgotha, and from Golgotha to His ascension into heaven.

And not alone that He Who here died was He, by Whom that earth, and those rocks had been created, but His dying was at the same time the great turning point in the history of the human race, in which the creation of this earth had reached its zenith.

On to the cross it goes the downward way. From that cross on, the way suddenly turns about and goes upward.

This mighty Savior of the world moreover is not exclusively a spiritualistic being, Who operates merely spiritually, but that Son of God has, with the human soul, also taken the *flesh and blood* of little children.

He has been seen bodily. He has been handled, seen, in external appearance, and to this coming of the Savior *in the flesh* the Scripture attaches a so far all-else-excelling significance, that the apostle calls you an *antichrist* when you do not open-heartedly and in all its far-reaching tendency acknowledge this coming of the Son of God *in the flesh.*

Hence, you see Him not alone saving sinners spiritually, but you also see Him do all sorts of material miracles in the realm of nature. He rebukes the storm, He walks upon the sea, He multiplies bread, He heals the sick, the dead He raises bodily.

Yea, more still, the cross of Golgotha is only perfected in the bodily resurrection. Already on the Mount His *body* and His *raiment* had been glorified in advance. And now His triumph completes itself in His *flesh and blood.*

And presently He ascends into heaven, not leaving here behind Him His earthly, material part of man, but takes it up with Him to heaven, and *in our flesh* is now seated at the right hand of God.

If now this flesh is related to all of nature, how could it be otherwise than that also *in nature* the dying of the Savior must have its afterthrill.

Must not His deathgroan become a deathgroan,

which worked its after-effect in the nature that surrounded the cross?

Not that this so took place, surprises; but had it not so taken place, something would have been lacking.

You would no longer have understood the deep relation of life between *nature* and the eternal Word.

If you do not understand this sympathetic groaning and quaking of nature with the dying of the mighty Savior, you understand equally little the curse which for sin's sake has come upon that nature, and of the awful natural signs that shall accompany Jesus' return.

When for the sake of sin the curse comes upon the earth, what else is this than a sympathetic mourning of nature with fallen man; the laying aside of the raiment of Paradise; in the mourning raiment of the curse, to bemoan the sin of man.

Sin is also spiritual of nature; and can not have its seat in the flesh, for how else would Satan, who has no flesh, have been able to sin, and to become to us the inspirer of all sin?

And yet, this spiritual event of the fall into sin does not merely affect man's bodily nature, and here bring us temporal death, but similarly affects all of nature, so that all her face is darkened, and thorns and thistles become the sign of her new appearance.

And this altogether selfsame effect is foretold in Scripture with respect to the future of the Lord Christ.

Then not only souls that are made blessed, but also *bodies* that are raised and glorified.

But not this alone. Revelation clearly teaches,

that then there shall also be signs and dreadful happenings in sun and moon and stars, in the seas and rivers of the earth.

Yea, finally this whole earthly nature shall pass away in one terrible world-conflagration, that from this world-conflagration a new earth, a glorified nature, a nature more glorious than Paradise once was, shall come forth.

And do not say, that while nature truly undergoes all this, yet in nature itself there is no sympathetic responsive life.

Does not the apostle Paul (Romans 8) tell us that "nature with uplifted head groans, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God? For that nature is subjected to the curse, not willingly, but by the will of Him, Who has subjected her to the curse; in hope, that this nature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For, so he concludes, we know, *that the whole nature groaneth and travaileth in pain together* until now."

How then could you say, that a nature, which with the advent of sin dons the garment of mourning, and still groaning ever waits for the revelation of glory which is to come, should not have quaked, when the great suit also regarding *her* future was decided, and the Mediator, Who was also her Creator, died away in the death on the cross.

Only let not this sympathetic quaking of the earth with the dying of Jesus become a reproach to you.

Though it be, that nature also has ties that bind her to Jesus, and sees her lot apportioned to her by Him, what is this tie compared with the mystical communion of soul, which is the possession of all

mankind, but which communion with the Savior of the world is in a different sense the portion of His elect.

The world of men stands indeed much closer related to Jesus than unconscious nature. And when you see, that while nature groans and quakes in sympathy with His agony, the people who stand by the cross, taken *en masse,* feel nothing for Jesus, and rather make a mockery of Him; yea, that these people are *human beings,* who make Jesus die, how shameful then is here the exhibition of our human race as over against nature. A nature that sympathetically mourns with Christ, while a human race regales itself in His dying.

But such being the case, it was our sin, our self-stupification, our utter degeneracy, an impossibility into which we had brought ourselves, of sharing sympathy with nature for the holy Jesus; of suffering and dying with Him.

But now look abroad upon the confessors of the Lord, the redeemed of that Savior, those vast multitudes, which are baptized in His name, and call themselves after Christ, as with a name of honor.

They have heard of the cross of Golgotha. In holy Scripture they have seen that suffering and dying of Christ portrayed as before their eyes. In all manners of ways they have been urged to witness it. By preaching, by reading, by picture and reflection.

The world is full of the cross. As ornament and sign of honor, it is carried abroad in all the world.

And every year the six or seven weeks return, in which the Christian world is urged to meditate again on the suffering and dying of the Mediator.

And these confessors, these redeemed of Jesus,

what do they feel in their heart as the suffering and dying of Christ is again brought to mind, again portrayed as before their eyes?

Can you say, that as once nature quaked with sympathy for Christ, so their heart and their soul groans and trembles with sympathy, as that cross is depicted before them?

Alas! how weak is this fellow-feeling; how almost imperceptible it is in His saints.

Even when His death is remembered at Holy Communion, how little holy emotion!

Standing before the temple at Jerusalem, Jesus said, that if the child of man should remain silent, the stones would immediately cry out (Luke 19:40).

And this has literally been fulfilled at Golgotha.

He who as man stood there remained silent, or did worse than remain silent, and blasphemed the Son of God. And yet the rocks have spoken, and the ground has quaked, and by it, that officer of the watch has been *moved*.

Do not deem therefore that nature is foreign to yourself. Have you not been taken from the earth? Does not your food come from that earth? Do not you once return again to the earth, by her to be dissolved and kept, till the future of the Lord?

In brief, is not your life allied with the life of nature? And does it not stand as a helpmeet by the side of you, or as a witness against you?

When her Spring returns again, she brings you with that Spring the return of Easter, and as a faithful watcher she comes to you every year to renew at the cross of Golgotha the dreadful suffering-scene that preceded the glory of Easter.

Oh, as the quaking of the earth at Jesus' death on

the cross brought to the officer of the watch a stirring in the soul, so let the voice of nature every year again bring you a like experience, as you commemorate the suffering of your Lord.

As once the earth under Golgotha has quaked, so let also your heart know that holy trembling, that quiet quaking, as you bring to mind again the terribleness of that entering of your Savior into eternal death.

XLVIII.

OUGHT NOT CHRIST TO HAVE SUFFERED ALL THESE THINGS?

OUR SAVIOR, after He has risen, allows us a backward look upon the suffering that lay behind Him.

"Ought," He asked Cleopas and his companion, "*ought* not Christ to have suffered these things, and thus enter into His glory?" (Luke 24, 26.)

A brief, a synoptic, a quickly spoken word, but in which He, Who had waded through the broad, deep stream of sorrow and death, once more focalized all the woefulness and all the bitter conflict of His soul, to recall it as in one glance to the memory of His disciples.

All these things; how unspeakably much there lay in that brief word! The cup brimful and running over, which had been handed to Him by His own dear Father. That cup which He had drunk draught by draught, at the last drop by drop, till at the end the very dregs had not been spared Him.

All these things; how far this all-embracing word went back for Him, Who "from the beginning of His incarnation," and "all the days of His life," had borne the wrath of God against the sin of our human race.

All these things; what bitter remembrance it awoke in Him of what He had suffered already by the single touch upon our in sin and misery lost human race; suffered by what Satan and his demons had machinated against the Holy Child of God and presently against the Teacher in Israel; suffered by what the children of the world in their ignorance, or the

men of the world in their malicious purpose had done to Him; suffered of the multitudes that did not understand Him, of the people of Israel, that unwilling to receive Him as their Messiah, wanted to stone Him; suffered of the mighty ones of the earth; and suffered above all of His own, otherwise so faithful, but so often blinded disciples.

All these things; where would you begin and where end, if you would rehearse everything that lies in this comprehensive word from the flight into Egypt to the *Eli Lama Sabachthani*?

It is such a world, such an unfathomable depth, such an ocean of suffering, which by the wrath of God, for our sakes, had come upon Him, and has surrounded Him on every side, that you can understand how the man of art could place upon the lips of the Man of sorrows the word from the Lamentations: "All ye, that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

Above all because in addition to this Jeremiah complained: "Like the sorrow, which the Lord hath done unto me, when He afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger."

And of that suffering He, Who endured it all, after it has been struggled through, asks: *Ought it not?*

Ought not Christ to have suffered all these things? Do you not feel yourselves, and understand, that it could not have been averted, and that therefore it was not averted?

A high, a holy *must,* was dominant here, deep of significance especially on the lips of Him, from Whose lips the mournful prayer had come: Take, Father, this cup away from me, except I drink it.

And that high, holy must is not like a mystery, which He unveils to His disciples. He does not say: "You could not surmise it, but now, after that it has all been suffered, I tell you what it meant. It had to be so; it could not have been otherwise."

On the contrary the Victor over death and grave appeals to them themselves; to what they should know about it independently of Him; to what was manifest from the whole Old Testament Scripture, that the Messiah when He came, would be as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, and also that He would be as One smitten of God and afflicted, that He might give His soul as an expiatory sacrifice.

Ought not, so Jesus asks, ought not, according to what counts to you yourselves as certain from God's Word, ought not Christ to have suffered all these things, and only thus enter into His glory?

Yea, stronger still.

Jesus does not say: "Ought not Christ to have *suffered*?" but: "Ought not Christ to have suffered *all these things*?" as though He asked them, whether the whole program of His dark, somber way of suffering did not stand outlined beforehand in Moses and the prophets.

Jesus knew well that His suffering had surprised them; His disciples had not been able in advance to enter into it; suddenly it had come upon them, and it had overwhelmed them.

And now that all is over the Lord shows them that this surprise was sinful; that *all these things* should not have appeared strange to them. That *all these things* ought rather to have been to them a seal the more to His Messiahship.

O, it would have been altogether different, had

they understood the Scripture not merely externally, but also spiritually.

For in all that Scripture it stood so plainly and so clearly written, that *so* and not otherwise it must occur, and that Christ *must suffer all these things,* that through the gate of justice He might enter into His glory.

So this *ought* refers to Holy Scripture, for beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus expounded unto them that holy ought broadly and clearly from the Word of God.

It *ought* because it stood so written in Moses and all the prophets.

First the figure of the Messiah had been shown; even *before* He came upon earth in the flesh.

As it reads in Heb. 1:6, already in the Old Covenant the Lord *had brought His Son into the world.* Not yet in the flesh, but *in image.*

It had been shown to Israel beforehand Who and how the Messiah was to be, so that when He came, Israel, comparing this image given from of old with His actual appearance, in holy enthusiasm should exclaim: "Thou art the Son of God, the King of Israel!" and in every place the voice of rejoicing should have been heard: This day in our ears and before our eyes is this Scripture fulfilled.

For this reason Jesus Himself, and the Evangelist and the Apostle continally vie as it were to point out that this also must needs happen to Him, *that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

Yea, this extends even so far, that when it comes to the *It is finished* that resounded on Golgotha, the Evangelist understands this also as a fulfillment of prophecy.

In that Holy Scripture, which God's love had presented to Israel, the Messiah stood portrayed; portrayed in holy symbols; portrayed in a broad series of types and events; portrayed in lyric song and holy prophecy; portrayed in His being; portrayed in His offices; portrayed in the work which He should accomplish; in the triumph which He was to achieve; but portrayed also in the suffering that He was to endure.

In Moses and the Prophets Life's image and Life's program both were depicted and clearly outlined.

And now, that this Only Begotten One, Whom God loved, is come, and has exhibited that selfsame prophecied image in flesh and blood, and has fulfilled that awful program of suffering to the end, now He asks His disciples, as with Scripture in hand, whether it *ought* not thus to have taken place, and whether Christ should not have *suffered all these things,* and thus enter into His glory.

But of course, not *because of that Scripture.*

It was not so, that accidentally and unfortunately it stood so written in that Scripture, and that, since it stood so written there, alas, no escape was possible.

It is not with the Scriptures as it was with Pilate's superscription on the cross, that God should now say: What is written, is written, and therefore must so be accomplished.

It is not as with the law of the Medes and Persians, which for the sake of exalting the sacredness of law, could never be modified, so that for the sake of maintaining the high and holy character of Scripture, Jesus had to be sacrificed, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

To him who takes it in this sense, Scripture is a *fetish,* and from it no word of eternal life addresses itself to him.

We should never be concerned about that Scripture as Scripture and nothing more; but always and solely about that Scripture as the *Word of God.*

Around God, and not around that Scripture, the history of sin and grace moves itself as around its eternal center; and never may that Scripture have honor for anything else, than that in it *the word of our God* comes to us.

Hence with respect to this also Christ *ought* to have suffered all these things, not because it stood so written in that Scripture, but because for our instruction and left for us to discover, God had thus put it in that Scripture, held it before us and prophecied it.

The necessity that could not be averted, that our Savior, on Whom is founded all our hope, had to suffer all these things, that as a sheep that is dumb before her shearers, submissively and willingly He had to accomplish the sacrifice of Himself; this necessity lay not in that Scripture, but in God.

Because God *is God* and can not deny Himself, and because with Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, therefore *it had to be so,* and that it had to come to pass in this way and for this reason, is what Holy Scripture reveals unto us.

From the burning bush God had spoken to Moses, saying: *I shall be Whom I shall be,* that is my Name eternally, and in the fact that the Almighty is Jehovah, lies the necessity, that Jesus must drink the cup, drink it to the last drop.

Not as though there is a law above God, to which

God the Lord should be subjected, a certain eternal law, which should likewise bind God.

Determining everything, but determined Himself by nothing save Himself, there is no ought in God, save that which surges up from His own Being.

Against this gloriously high and holy Being our sin had arrayed itself, and against that sin, that He might remain Himself, i. e. God, His Divine wrath operated with all the weight of His almightiness.

And from this came that bitter, that terrible *ought,* that it could not be otherwise, but that Jesus *had* to suffer all these things.

For Him there was no escape, ***that there should be an escape for you.***

XLIX.

JESUS MADE A SURETY

IT has been preached out of it, and in the end it has been scorned and mocked, that Jesus is our Surety; nevertheless the Church has always maintained it, and every redeemed and freshly troubled soul, when permitted to gain her confidence, holds fast by it, looking unto her *Surety.*

A surety, who not probably *shall* pay, but who has paid our debt for us to the last penny, is for him who has known financial distress, and found no way of escape, the richest thought of deliverance from anxiety and uneasiness of soul.

He knows nothing of this who was always able to pay his bills promptly, and who in the anxiety about his debts has never felt his honor slip away from him. But the ordinary man, who is continually in financial straits, who has again and again paid out his last penny without knowing where the next pennies were to come from, knows this well. When provisions are scant in the household, and stock in business is low, and expenses increase and income does not enlarge. Then there is no rest by day, and in the hours of night anxious thoughts haunt you. And when things go on from bad to worse, so that there is not only nothing left to spend, but debt is inevitable, and debt increases, and no turn in business brings relief, an honest man feels bands tighten around his neck; they become to him at last as bands of hell. And should some one then come in, who is abundantly able to pay, and to pay promptly, and say to him: "Cease your anxieties, I shall be surety for you; if at the end of the week you

still can not pay, I shall pay for you, and you need never pay me back,"—the troubled soul would revive; at once the cords of death would fall from him. And when at the end of the week the surety paid all the bills, and the receipt is brought home for full payment of debt received, the heart of him who has so been brought out of his straits leaps with joy, he is jubilant with delight and gladness, and among friend and neighbor he is voluble with praises of the goodness and kindness of his surety, who turned the darkness of his soul into light, and drew him out of the nethermost pit.

For this reason the class of people that has experienced such conditions of earthly need, is so much more devoted, than they that are better to do, to the praises of Jesus as our Avenger and Surety.

They understand that language. That name, that word Surety is to them so eloquent, is expressive of so much, above every other word so precious.

To have a Surety also for the soul, is their eternal peace with God.

What modern learning has asserted, that in Hebrew 7: 22 there is mention of a Surety for God with us, and not of a Surety for us with God, is therefore altogether untenable.

No, when it reads: "Of so much better a covenant Jesus is become Surety" (Dutch version), it points very definitely to a Surety Who appears before God *for us,* and executes *our affairs* with the Holy One.

The connection shows this.

Aaron and Melchizedek stand one over against the other. Both are priests, but priests of a different, diverging order. Aaron by reason of birth, Melchizedek for ever. Aaron continually offering sacrifices;

the priest after the order of Melchizedek with one offering making everything perfect.

But in whatever way Aaron and Melchizedek may differ, in this point they are one, that both fulfill the *highpriestly* office, and this office consists in this, that they do *"the things which in our behalf must be made right with God."*

Only Aaron did this sacramentally, symbolically, figuratively. He offered a bullock, a ram, a goat. And that this blood of goats and of bullocks was able to bring peace to the believing Jew, was not due to that blood or to that goat, but exclusively to the sacramental appointment of God, Who had ordained that priest, and had given power to that priest, in this way to depict and to forecast the eternal offering of Christ, and the abiding priesthood of Melchizedek.

The spiritual power of his priestly office did not come from the offering by itself, but from the fact that God had so appointed him priest, had so ordained and sacramentally sealed him.

With that *priestly* service the Scripture puts the service of Jesus as *Surety* altogether on one line. What with Aaron is called *priest,* is here with Jesus called Surety. Read it in its connection: Heb. 7:22-24, "Of a so much better Covenant is Jesus become *Surety,* and they truly were many *priests,* because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, but this (man) because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

Thus Surety here is the same as *priest,* but He is called the *Surety,* because the other priests have passed away. But He has *this* in common with the Surety, that the deliverance which He has brought about, ends the matter and forever dismisses and terminates it.

Hence Surety means. that Jesus is your *real* priest, Who has closed your account with God, and that He offers you the guarantee that it remains for ever ended.

The opponent therefore was so far right, that Jesus as our Surety is more and something altogether different, from an ordinary surety for debt among men.

This superficial, cold and calculating representation was not derived from Holy Writ, but had been borrowed from the heartless and inexorable Roman law.

In this hard, inflexible right (law) the fundamental error was, that it put man alongside of man, took each one by himself, and showed no appreciation of, nor feeling for the organic and social tie, which, according to the divine ordinance of creation, and according to the counsel of God's grace, knits man to man, and unites people to people.

By transferring the significance of the surety according to this fanatic, individualistic right to Jesus, the representation gained ground of one's own *self*, as bent under guilt; and over against this the *self* of Jesus, which took the place of our *self*. In addition to this it was reasoned out with hairsplitting distinctions whether Jesus was Surety *ex promisso* or *ex fideiusso*.

This fell short of the honor of God.

According to this view the sinner was the unfortunate individual who aroused pity, and Jesus was the kind Deliverer, Who helped a sinner out of his distress; while God was the angry, the inexorable Judge, Whose wrath contrasted unfavorably with the love of Jesus.

The soul indeed was saved, but fellowship between the soul and the Father suffered loss. It was Jesus Who had delivered us out of the hard hand of the Father.

This is entirely unscriptural.

According to the witness of Scripture, our salvation does not go out from Jesus, but from the Father. It is the Father Who appoints the Mediator, and the Father Who so loves the world, that atonement comes for sin.

Altogether differently indeed the Scripture teaches, that he who is saved, is an organic member of Jesus' body, under Him as Head; that he who is redeemed is one planting with Jesus, living from His life; and that he who becomes free, becomes free on account of the Covenant, in which he is counted under Christ as his Covenanthead.

Thus the blessed sense, of having one's Surety in Christ, does not rest upon the incidence that such a Surety took compassion upon us, but altogether differently upon God's eternal purpose, to incorporate us in the body of Christ. Because He, the Christ, and with Him, His body, and in that body every member, that became one planting with it, is sanctified, and therefore the soul rests in her Savior with an eternal rest, and a far higher certainty still than a debtor finds in his earthly surety, the implanted soul finds in the Surety of the better Covenant, i. e., in Christ.

And that this Surety has paid, has no connection with an external, accidental, arbitrary bail, but is included in the fact that this Surety is a *Priest for ever*. That is to say, that this eternal Highpriest has brought the *real* offering, the offering once for all,

and that He lives eternally with God, to make the fruit of that offering to shine forth gloriously, in that He lives, and in that He lives to pray for us.

So redemption does not come from a juridic bail, but from the holy *priesthood,* and that this priestly office of the Mediator obtains the character of *bail,* lies in the fact, that Jesus is not like Aaron a priest of a passing covenant, but in that He is priest in an enduring and eternally abiding covenant, and therefore offers the same perfection of peace, and discharge from debt, and blessed rest, which is enjoyed among men, when a surety appears, who disarms the creditor and sets the debtor free from his prosecutor.

So it is not Jesus my *Priest,* and in *addition* to this my Surety.

No, it is Jesus your Priest, your Highpriest, your Reconciler by His own offering, and *in* this fact that He is your Priest, and *in* this bringing of His own offering, He is simultaneously *your Surety.* He is this solely and alone because His priesthood is not for a time, but endures *eternally;* and thus destroys all guilt; makes the atonement complete and ever enduring; and offers you a still more absolute certainty of escape and liberation, than embodies itself among men in the surety, who has paid, and can lay nothing to our charge.

And this is the form, the word, the expression, which Scripture itself lays upon our lips, to give utterance to that blessed sense of liberation and redemption.

He who understands and sees through Golgotha, and at the same time grasps what the office of Christ's Priesthood is in the sanctuary above; and has plucked the fruit of it for his own soul, and by

the Holy Spirit knows that it is applied to his own soul, so that with Paul he glories: "I, too, being justified by faith, have peace with God, not through myself, but through my Lord Jesus Christ, always comes back again therefore to this blessed confession: *Jesus is my Surety.*

He glories in Christ as his Savior, as his Mediator, as his Reconciler and King, but from all this there does not yet shine out to him that *sure,* that *finished,* that *accomplished,* that *eternal rest-producing* truth, in which as child of God he knows himself blessed.

There is more here than a vista that is opened; more than a medicine that is here offered; more than a way unto life that here discloses itself before his feet. He senses, he experiences, he feels, he revels in the fact, that *the peace is there,* that it needs nothing additional, that it is finished, that it is a securely closed account, and that it is for him an eternally guaranteed matter with God and before His holy angels.

This finished state of the case, which makes it impossible ever to be opened again, which keeps it from ever being made a matter of litigation again, which exhausts all depth, and this absolute certainty, which now and forever no longer guarantees the *offering* but the *giving* character of the salvation, which he possesses in Christ, this is what he confesses before God and men, when jubilantly he sings: *Christ is my Surety.*

L.

THE BLOOD OF ABEL

BLOOD, which no longer remains confined to the veins, but issues forth, and is seen, affects the nerves of your eye unpleasantly, and makes you shudder.

Shudder; which, according to the nature of the case, occasions very different motions in your heart. Shudder; which makes you run when that blood spells danger to your own blood. Shudder; which makes you offer sympathethic, saving help, when life has not yet ebbed away with the blood. Or, shudder; which rouses the passion of revenge in you, when murder has been committed, and from the shed blood a voice cries for vengeance unto God.

Blood, as it issues forth and stains the ground red before your eyes, takes violent hold of you. The sight of blood, as it reminds you of death, or threatens death, at once takes you out of your ordinary train of thought, makes you oblivious of all things else, and rivets all your attention upon this human life, that already has died, or may die.

Ezekiel, the mighty prophet in Israel, transfers this violent emotion to God the Lord, even where there was no mention of "shed blood".

"When I passed by thee," so speaks the Lord God through Ezekiel in the sixteenth chapter, the sixth verse, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *Live;* yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *Live.*" Here both in language and tone speaks the vehemence of emotion at the sight of blood. And this is added: "No eye pitied thee, to

have compassion upon thee." In man the human was blunted. But with God there was compassion, and at the sight of the lukewarm motherblood, in which the newborn infant bathed itself, the language of compassion goes out. "I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood: *Live.*"

And this vehemence of emotion at the sight of blood, increases as danger becomes more imminent. You face a small wound, but every wound, as it bleeds more freely, affects you. When streaming blood forms a pool, disquiet overmasters you. When the red of blood contrasts itself against the sheet-white of the face, your disquiet and anxiety become terror. And when the blood, which you see on the corpse, speaks of murder, it is as though your own blood congeals in the veins.

There is nothing that disconcerts one more vehemently than the sight of such shed human blood. Passion can excite you to bloodthirstiness. But however much on the field of battle the eye may steel itself against blood, the moment the fierceness of battle is ended, the sight of the shed blood is equally dreadful again, because you feel that in this blood *human life* has flowed out.

"The soul is in the blood", thus spake Moses already in the wilderness to the people that had been led out.

And this is it.

In human blood undulates human life. When that blood is shed, the soul itself is gone from the body. And therefore shed blood addresses your soul so vehemently, and makes your own blood so disquieted within you.

Never should the blood of a single man have been poured out.

The blood is the stream within us, which bears our life. Our flesh and bone are as the bedding, through which our blood flows. It courses through our heart with every pulsebeat. And the more violently our feeling is aroused, the quicker the blood hastens through our veins, yea, rushes up, suffusing the face.

But blood must remain closed up. It must remain hidden. Even where it crimsons our face, and strains our flesh, and visibly courses through our veins,—*as blood* it should never be seen.

When Cain slew his brother Abel, and the blood of Abel flowed out, human blood showed itself for the first time to the human eye.

Here is the sin.

Sin, that destroys the soul, does not rest, until it has also rendered the human body undone. And it keeps on, till the blood, that bare the life and therefore remained hidden, issues out through wounded tissue, and with it carries off human life.

Only in poured-out blood does sin find its consummation. Then it can not go further. Then it has treacherously slain the man, who let it in.

And for this reason, fallen man is not saved except through blood.

One calls the Scripture lovely, and the Gospel tender; but throughout the whole of Scripture there is mention again and again of a stream of blood that must be waded through, that there might be escape from sin; and that Gospel knows no peace save through the blood of the cross.

Embracing the whole Gospel in His person and suffering, Jesus took the cup full of red wine, and said to His disciples: This cup is the blood of the New Testament, My blood, that is shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Outside of the Scripture sounds also the selfsame voice from human history. Boldest imagination itself forms no idea of the sea of human blood that has been poured out upon the earth, that human life might be lifted up to higher levels.

It is true, war is horrible. Nothing is more awful. The heart shudders at it. And yet, the nations that have not found courage in their blood, to whet the sword for fatherland, for liberty, for independence, have languished, have perished. And those peoples alone, who inspired by heroic courage, have not esteemed their own blood, have risen to influence and power.

What God said through Ezekiel: "I say unto you in your blood, live," is the Divine utterance which finds its confirmation also in the history of nations.

From every conflict "unto blood" the nation ever rose up renewed, rejuvenated, refreshed. The otherwise slumbering powers were awakened. Higher energy developed itself in every realm of life. Imposing forms, great figures, men who interpret the life of an age, have risen up in richest numbers after and from such a conflict, from a conflict that went unto blood.

With such a conflict a cry of rejoicing, a cry of admiration goes up from those who witness it.

When your blood flows for the sake of right and truth, the seriousness of life has reached its highest degree and tension.

Then it means business. Then the thrill of existence goes through to the deepest bottom of life.

See it anywhere.

The hireling fights splendidly, and yet he does not inspire. What inspires is a people, that pours out its blood for its holiest pledges.

Yet "the blood of Abel" says still more.

Cain was Abel's brother, and why slew he Abel? Why else than because Abel believed, because Abel was righteous, because Abel pleased God, and because Abel's fear of God allowed Cain's conscience no rest.

The blood of Abel is the blood of the righteous, that is presumptuously shed by the unrighteous in violation of right.

And this is the blood, that cries unto God.

Did not God say to Cain: There is a voice of blood, of your brother, which cries unto Me from the ground.

So is martyrblood. The blood, which, as Scripture says, when Babylon is destroyed, shall be found beneath its ruins.

If by the blood of heroes States have been built, the blood of Abel builds the Kingdom of God.

It is a going into death, as seeing the Invisible, capturing eternal life; in full assurance that from blood thus shed seed shall germinate, whose matured blossom shall diffuse fragrance to the glory of God.

It is to show that one believes, and by his faith has laid hold on a reality, which in power and inspiration far excels, everything that is before one's eyes.

So Abel fell, when his brother slew him, and no one saw it but God, and no human eye had compassion upon him, till Adam and Eve found the bloodless corpse, and confided it to the earth.

So fell the prophets, whose blood was poured out on the earth, to the blood of Zacharias, the son of Berechias, whom fanatical Jews killed between the temple and the altar.

So fell the martyrs of God's church, who became prey to the maws of lions, who were put to the wheel, were burned in the fire, or whose head fell on the place of shame.

And yet in all this Abel, the apostles, and God's martyrs bare but the shadow of what was made perfect upon Golgotha.

There alone *the blood* has been poured out.

That blood, which speaks *still better things* than the blood of Abel.

The blood of the *Lamb of God!*

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